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# critique

## studies in modern fiction

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A literary review devoted to essays on contemporary fiction. CRITIQUE is published three times yearly at Box 4068, University Station, Minneapolis 14, Minnesota. Subscription rates are \$2.00 per year, and individual issues are \$.75 per copy. All manuscripts must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

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## News and Notes

There is certainly no little hazard and considerable temerity in publishing another little magazine at this time. Like "water to water," a new magazine tends to ease itself unnoticed in and out of the literary market. We feel, however, that there is a real need and place for CRITIQUE, since it will be devoted primarily to analysis and commentary upon those contemporary writers of fiction who have not, as yet, received the critical attention they deserve. Thus, we will emphasize, as far as possible, the lesser known or less fully treated figures of modern fiction, and try to keep at a minimum the space devoted to the "established" writer.

In order to help us plan future issues, we would appreciate comments and suggestions from our readers. Letters of special interest, comments on past issues, or ideas for future articles will be included in this column. We are interested in receiving such news as recent publications, new magazines, conferences, seminars, or lectures. It is our hope that this section of the magazine will become a useful center for exchanging information about current literary activities.

And we are, of course, primarily anxious to receive manuscripts. The greater number of our issues will deal with a single writer, while other issues will be general in nature, including essays on various writers, and problems, of modern fiction. We have tentatively planned to devote single issues to Elizabeth Bowen, Saul Bellow, and Flannery O'Connor, and we welcome essays on these authors. Our next issue will be a general one, and definite plans for the subsequent issue will, necessarily, depend upon the material we receive within the coming months.

THE EDITORS



## The Forest Of the South

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE

I have just read again Miss Gordon's *The Forest of the South*. I have known these stories almost as long as the author, but I put them down with that wondering sense of surprise at how much better they are than I had remembered. Time in the way of the topical has left no mark. They are like old houses which have weathered all seasons and fashions, rising upon a landscape unobtrusively but with such authority they seem not to have been made by the hand of man but to have grown along with the flora and the fauna. This is a mark of objectivity. It is more. It is the mark of an artist who will last. To return to a book or story and find always more is the surest way to distinguish between the complex art of fiction and the simpler art of narrative.

Several years ago in *The Sewanee Review* I had something to say, particularly about Miss Gordon's novels. I examined them in terms of the tools of the craft. The use of these tools are always twofold, conscious and intuitive. This process is the fundamental mystery of the art of fiction, I suppose of any art. In trying to recreate the critic always takes a risk, but less of a risk in watching the way the technique works, for the only way meaning takes form is the way the words are put together. I seem to be stating a platitude, but this simple

truth is often obscured, and not only by the historical scholars.

It had seemed to me that up to *The Strange Children* the action proper of Miss Gordon's novels had always been cast against an explicit understanding of a sense of history. But there is a difference of approach between the novelist using past time and the historian. The historian, as scientist, is interested in cause and effect, the discovery of principles of action. The fiction writer takes a different post of observation. Whatever the point of view the action seen by the novelist creates the illusion of action taking place in the present tense. To the historian the past is dead. To the novelist the past is contemporaneous, or almost. There can be no absolute sense of contemporaneity in the recreation of any age, or segment of an age, anterior to the time in which the author writes. Indeed, if this were so, the principal value of using the past would be lost: the value being just this illusion of the contemporary within a context of historical perspective, so that while an action is taking place it is rendered in terms larger than those of its immediate appearance. This is, I believe, the furthest extension, and it is just that, of the aesthetic distance taken by writers concerned primarily with the formal, objective view. The very illusion of life defines the difference between history as fiction and history as science. For this reason the well done novel is the only way of recovering the illusion of past time, since people acting make history. I say illusion because we must leave the final truths to God. The question to ask is not: Is the story historically sound? but: Does the action represent the behavior of men and women in this given situation. Does it show what really happened, not the report of what seemed to happen. And secondly, does the form make the most of the subject, the subject the most of the form. The critical reader asks literary questions, which are the only questions he can ask about a literary form. His answers will show whether the history is sound.

Action takes place, the natural man is restrained, by the complex of institutions in any given society. The novelist and historian up to a point are together in recovering the look of these institutions. They must both do the same kind of research, but the novelist goes further. He must bring the people alive in their manners and customs, their habits of behavior. To

the novelist the cultural pattern becomes in its broadest sense the enveloping action against which, and out of which, the action proper complicates itself. This action involves the conflicts, tensions, defeats and triumphs which are the constantly recurring deeds of the human situation. The enveloping action is the mould. Miss Gordon's structure depends upon a cultural loss, caught in a succession of historic images, a loss which impairs the possibilities of human nature. This impairment, made concrete in the action proper, makes explicit the meaning of history. The controlling image, therefore, is a double clue to meaning, through the action to the enveloping action, and vice versa. For example, in *Green Centuries*, the image of the wilderness usurps Rion Outlaw's mind. The wilderness becomes the antagonist. Man has set himself to triumph over the natural world. This is a revolutionary change in the Christian attitude toward the world. Rion's very name of Outlaw is a symbol of this change. As Miss Gordon's novels show, the true antagonist is woman. Manhood best defines itself in the stress between the sexes, which is the source of physical and spiritual human intercourse. Rion's obsession shows itself for what it is in the disaster which overtakes him and his wife and children, indirectly commenting on the historic progression in western society. The Indians are there to show the mystery, the supernatural suffusing the natural. That Rion should see them as feminine shows his blindness as it shows the cost of the distortion of his anima. In all her novels the progress of this changing attitude discloses itself in its effects upon her heroes and heroines, the true protagonists and antagonists. When Merlin withdrew with Niniane into the forest, he drew the magic circle of love about them, from which arose the shady hedges, the flowers and fragrant herbs to encompass the songs of knights and ladies. Niniane could not get enough of the music, but she understood only one verse: "Bitter suffering ends the sweet joys of newborn love." This is the oldest song. It is Miss Gordon's song, accompanied by the discords of history.

In one way or another this is the subject, as well, of her stories. In the title piece, "The Forest of the South," the conquest of the South is the destruction of a society formal enough and Christian enough to allow for the right relationships between the sexes. The Civil War was total war, not the restricted

war of a Christian state. It returns people not to Merlin's forest but to the forest as wasteland. The madness of the girl makes its comment. Total destruction is madness. It shows itself explicitly and concretely in the basic relationship between man and woman. It is the conquerer's defeat, because he is fated to love what he has destroyed. The blowing up of Clifton is the controlling image. The roles are reversed between conquered and conqueror. The Confederate captain will die with this knowledge, so that his death is a kind of triumph. The victor has the flaw of being a gentleman who is in love. Blind, too, he has confused the response of madness for love. He is condemned to a living death, not the marriage bed but the madwoman's bed of straws.

In "Hear the Nightingale Sing" the theme is the same, except that the enveloping action becomes the home, that constant symbol of family, whose large connections, based upon a Christian sacrament, make up the structure of the state. When Barbara, leading the mule from off the Yankee's dead body, says let's go home, the irony is obvious. The home is already gone. Both she and the soldier will be forever deprived of it. The soldier represents the violator, and his death enlarges the meaning of his act. It is his streaming and bloody eyes which gives the manner of his dying, and the loss of eyes is an old symbol of castration, the absolute spiritual loss resulting in this instance in letting war go beyond its restricted concept. This Yankee is one of Miss Gordon's best characters. He is a sympathetic figure. His song, with its nostalgia, releases through the sense of hearing what it once meant for Barbara or what it might have been in love for Ladd, if only the music had played longer. What is common to both, releasing common memories, only sets them further apart, although twice the Yankee almost recovers his humanity: when he rises from the food and in the parlor. But he gives way to appetite, the mule's thud brings him back to his part as enemy; yet he alternates between the brutal habits of war and feeling. He smiles, he sings, he is thoughtful of the mule's leg. He bridges his split by irony, but he cannot save himself. Irony is not enough. He dies by the feet of the brute instinctual forces released by war, symbolized in the sterile mule. The gift of the mule by Ladd to Barbara (her name foreshows her doom) stands for the hopelessness

of their relationship. It does destroy the enemy, but it can stand only negatively in Ladd's stead. It cannot restore what the enemy himself has destroyed.

The most extreme statement of this reversal of roles results from the complications in "The Ice House." The Yankee contractor is a symbol of the revolutionary change in American society, the acceptance of materialism as the final value in the state. It is this which has triumphed in the Civil War. The defeat of the Confederacy destroyed in the Union the restraints of the checks and balances which took into account the depravity of man, at the same time as socially the values of a traditional hierarchy of relationships were smashed. Death, of course, is the final comment on matter. It reduces it to dust and the bare bone. By implication life conceived only in terms of the material aims makes of it a living death, by denying the spirit. The contractor is the embodiment of this denial in his own person and as representative of the Yankee attitude. In her use of symbol Miss Gordon never, as Hawthorne too often does, makes it carry the burden of meaning alone. Whenever she uses symbol, it is always matched by its natural counterpart, which is to say that she has discerned the inadequacy of allegory and propaganda for fiction. "The Ice House" stands for death, but it is also a place to store ice. The Yankee bones and decaying flesh, are the symbols of death, but they are also the physical objects of death. The object and the symbol are further concentrated, dumped into the ice house. As well, the contractor's indifference to any meaning in the burial other than how much he can make out of it is a cultural debasement equal to social death. This makes his avarice sinister, particularly because of his unawareness. Further, the contractor's appearance resembles death. His belly almost breaking through his breeches brings to mind the image of the swelling, bloating stage of decay. The irony finds its point in his gray hairs, which anticipate his own end and a coming up to judgment. This is all seen through the innocent eyes of the boys of the defeated people. Where he is insensitive, they are sensitive only to the physical nausea of death. They have naturally no affective reaction, for the dead is not their dead. Their feeling and reflections are all for life, which is struggling here with its opposite, and at the end it is life which triumphs. The triumph is more telling

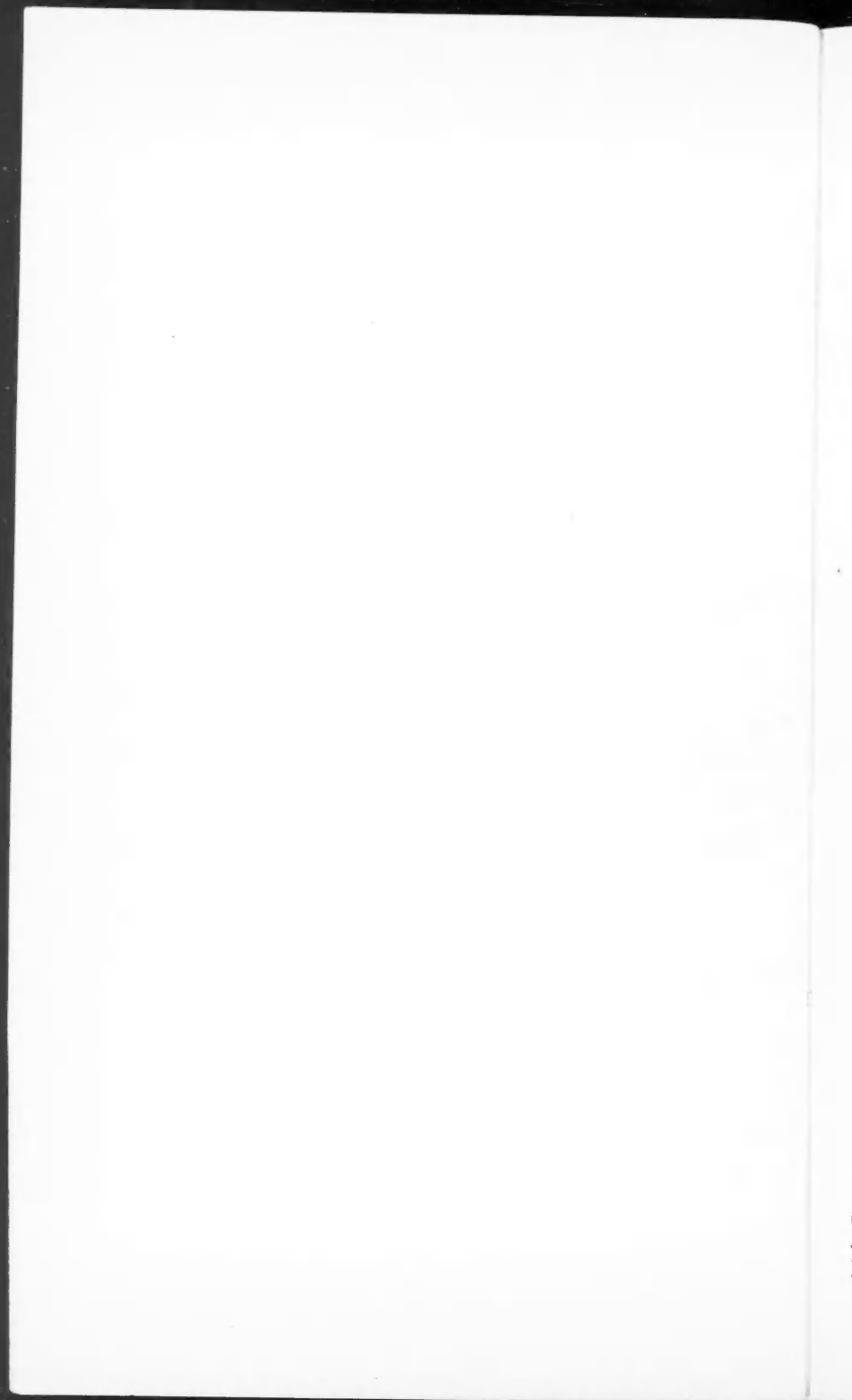
because he is a man who ought to know better and they are boys. Their contemptuous laughter makes of him a low comedy figure; but a grim one too. When Doug says, "There ain't a whole man in ary one of them boxes," he is saying more than he knows. Man who views himself only in physical terms is only half a man. He has ignored the crucial drama of the soul.

This is one of the few stories where the complication lacks a woman. Miss Gordon rarely departs either in her novels or stories from the stress between the sexes, which allows for the most complete rendition of the soul's drama. At least there is the universal complication. Her attack is often indirect and always subtle, for example in the Tom Rivers and Aleck Maury pieces. These stories of field and stream and livery stable seem to belong only to a masculine world. But this seeming is only Miss Gordon's unique use of her historic image. Tom Rivers, Aleck Maury, and Ladd perhaps would be special cases in any society, but their singular aptitudes would merely bring to a sharper focus the look of their communities. They seem to flee their women, but what they are actually doing is seeking means of preserving their integrity. They are dispossessed men. The state in which they would function best has been destroyed. They would have been its ornaments and leaders. Men of integrity, aristocratic, they cannot become servile as the poor blooded man who is afraid to pick his own cotton. Tom Rivers by picking it shows how the state has declined. Any aristocracy functions by instinctive action and within a code of manners, but its decisions need not be irrational because they are not always reasoned out. They don't have to stop to reason, because they know what they are and so can act instantly out of this knowledge. Tom Rivers' girl makes an impossible demand on him. She makes the literal error of asking him to promise never to drink again. She is asking him to surrender his sovereignty, which the Wife of Bath says is what woman wants of man. But her demand shows Tom she is unworthy of this surrender. She is presenting him with two impossibilities: one, that he deny the underlying conflict between the sexes; two, that he conform to a kind of mores which would be not only alien but destructive to him. She is unworthy because she represents these mores. All she had to say was, "Do you love me?" If she had, she would have destroyed him, be-

cause he then would have involved himself in a world he could not function in. His instinct for self-preservation, and by this much is the dispossessed aristocrat reduced, takes him away from her into a masculine world of horses and whores. His intercourse is diminished, and he will be a wanderer, but his integrity will remain. The action proper, the picking of the cotton, the treachery of the servile "new" men, unfolds his predicament and the meaning of the story. The boy's nostalgia for the old community of families, done largely through his memory of nature, the way the sun passes the garden fence at the homeplace, when land and family mutually identify each other, refers to the loss, in the historic terms this image makes. The exile from this location is responsible for the situation the Tom Rivers find themselves in.

Aleck Maury is the Tom Rivers who married. He is a valiant warrior in love and wears his wife out, but almost too late. He tries to fill up his remaining years with the sports of field and stream. In this way he saves what he can by living as fully as he can. He, too, is an exile; but he has instinctively chosen the one ritual left which can more nearly use all of his resources. Of course it never quite does it. Hunting and fishing had their places in the society that was destroyed. They were not meant to fill out a man's total occupation. In "The Burning Eyes" he was given the image which would save him, but "To Thy Chamber Window Sweet" and "Old Red" show him never free of danger. If never free, his instincts always save him.

With one or two exceptions the other stories in the book deal more directly with "bitter suffering ends the sweet joys of newborn love." The image of a changing or changed society withdraws further into the background here, the pure drama of love to the fore. I cannot here go into these stories. I have hoped to show that Miss Gordon's use of history is the right use. It recovers it as a living set of deeds, whose actions as they represent the universal predicament also interpret the changing flow of history. Now that she has joined the Catholic church, her material will receive a new emphasis and history another focus.





**Nature  
And Grace  
In  
Caroline  
Gordon**

LOUISE COWAN

In her most recent short story, "Emmanuele! Emmanuele!" Caroline Gordon has seized upon the Claudel-Gide contrast as a vehicle for an exploration of two opposite attitudes toward the artist's function. A young admirer of the celebrated Guillaume Fäy is discussing Fäy's journals with the poet Raoul Pleyol:

"In his journals he dares face himself. It is more than most of us can do . . ."

Pleyol said heavily: "It is more than any of us can do . . . Do you think that a man sees himself when he looks into a mirror? He sees only the pose he has assumed. If you want to see yourself look into the eyes of your friends—or your enemies—who are made in the image of God."

Heyward said stubbornly: "An artist's first duty is to confront himself."

Pleyol brought his big hand down on the desk. "An artist's first duty is the same as any other man's — to serve, praise, and worship God."

Pleyol's is the orthodox Christian position, one which Miss Gordon has displayed with increasing boldness in the last few years — in her anthology *The House of Fiction* (edited jointly with her husband, Allen Tate), in her critical essays on various

writers, in her novel *The Strange Children*, and now in the story "Emmanuele! Emmanuele!" But it is a position implicit in the Southern background in which she was irrevocably steeped.

In that it is concerned with a young man's struggle to assimilate his heritage, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* may be taken as representative of the Southern conception of the artist. On the basis of this interpretation, it is instructive to contrast it with Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in which, as the maturing Stephen Dedalus becomes more dedicated to his art, he finds he must progressively sever the ties that bind him to humanity. Finally, at the end of the work, it is "to forge the uncreated conscience" of his race that he sets out. His purpose is to bring into being a kind of truth that has not existed in life itself, and he is fully cognizant of the dangers inherent in such a task. In Faulkner's novel, on the contrary, Quentin Compson finds himself increasingly bound to a way of life, a group of people, and even a certain set of events — unwilling though he may be — as he is placed ever more surely in the position of viewer. His task has been to uncover what is already in existence, to uncover it and place it in the proper position to be recognized and known. His painful identification with the truth he sees and his suffering acceptance of his role are revealed in his cry, "I don't hate the South! I don't hate it!"—the antithesis of Stephen's cold rejection of his native land.

The difference in the two attitudes may be traced to the artist's conception of himself: as subject to the creator and the laws of his creation or as artificer of an independent order. Modern Southern writers in general have regarded their task as the discovery of an already existent pattern in actual experience rather than as the imposition of an ideal pattern upon experience. Their unanimity of attitude is not traceable to a conscious aesthetic (for there has been no traditional Southern theory of art), but to an instinctively coherent way of dealing with the world, a way inherited from their culture and underlying their own personal vision of life. This world view can best be described, I think, by the word *sacramental*, since it is a way of looking at the physical universe as existing both in its own right and as a sign. But, to the Southerner, matter is not in any simple fashion an embodiment of spirit.

Objects and creatures are real in themselves, and yet they are also mysteries, reflecting God and each other in a network of resemblances which at times illumine and at times veil the relationship between the creator and his creation. The mode of thought resulting from this attitude is analogical, and, though it is of course far older than the American South, it is not encountered consistently elsewhere in literature written in English since the seventeenth century.

What I have termed the sacramental attitude Caroline Gordon has described in a recent article ("Some Readings and Misreadings," *Sewanee Review*, Summer, 1953) as a "patient, passionate portrayal of natural objects" which, in being based on "a recognition of the natural order," she can only consider Christian, at least "in hope." She finds this kind of writing in Yeats and in the nineteenth-century masters of the art of fiction, from whom she learned her techniques. But many of the great nineteenth-century novels she finds to have a more direct indebtedness to Christianity, one grounded in revelation rather than immanence, for they embody unconsciously "the strange and original plot" of the Christian scheme of redemption. From the study of her masters—Flaubert, Turgenev, Chekhov, James, and the early Joyce—she gained not only her distinguished technical competence but an architecture basically Christian, one consistent "in hope" with her heritage. Moreover, her own creative imagination has given a remarkable integrity to the two traditions within which she has worked; and, though the surface of her novels (before *The Strange Children*, in 1951) moves toward destruction and despair, the "current in their depths" moves in a strongly different direction.

"My stories, I think, are all one story, and as yet I hardly know what the plot is," Caroline Gordon has written. "Like most fiction writers, I seem to spend my life contemplating the same set of events. Each novel is what I make of those events." It is perhaps her short stories that provide the key to what is "the same set of events," since they are of necessity more tightly constructed than the novels and less involved in an expansive enveloping action. Of the stories published in *The Forest of the South* (1945), more than half deal with the special betrayal involved in the man-woman relationship. In his admirable article "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image" (*Sewanee Review*,

Fall, 1949), Andrew Lytle has remarked in Miss Gordon's writings the theme of man's inadequacy to woman and has given as demonstration a detailed analysis of the short story "The Brilliant Leaves." This inadequacy of man is truly one of Miss Gordon's persistent themes and the consequent turning away of the woman one of the principal events in her stories. But there is another betrayal in "The Brilliant Leaves," another event, so that I may perhaps be forgiven if I consider the story further, taking advantage of Mr. Lytle's perceptive criticism. In this brief narrative, a boy watches helpless while the girl he loves falls to her death from a rocky ledge that she has wilfully insisted upon their climbing. The account would be one of unmitigated and senseless horror without the modifying and enlarging effect of the recurrent imagery which informs the story and, in reality, carries its meaning. At the beginning, when the boy goes to keep an innocent assignation with the girl in the woods, he must pass his mother and his aunt, who are sitting on the gallery, gossiping about the people who live in the white houses—the little white houses which, in the boy's eyes, cluster on the hill in all the solidarity of the featureless but encompassing world which cups his life. It is the boy who listens to the women on the porch recount the tale which is at once the prelude to and the recapitulation of the main story, and it is the boy who carries to the girl the tale of betrayal by inadequacy—the story of an old maid, Miss Sally Mainwaring, who, when a girl, descended a ladder to find her father, shotgun in hand, and her lover disappearing into the bushes. The woman's fate begins to be seen as an ironic parallel to the young couple's when the boy proposes marriage to the girl and is answered, "They wouldn't let us; we're too young." By the time the pair comes to the falls, the reader has been prepared for the powerful extensions of meaning in Miss Gordon's careful description:

They came out of the hollow and were on the brow of the mountain again. In front of them was a series of limestone ledges that came down one after another like steps. Gushing out from one of them, filling the whole air with the sound of its rushing, was the white waterfall they called the Bridal Veil.

This is the "ladder" the girl is to descend when her foot slips and she falls backward; and like Miss Sally Mainwaring, she is

to find no human lover waiting for her below. But, before the accident, standing over the precipice, her face moist from the spray, she urges the boy to attempt the climb behind the falls. "I like doing things with you," she confides, and, his cheeks burning, he consents against his better judgment. Later, we know from her failure to see the boy when he finally reaches her—though her eyes are open—and from her screams when he tries to lift her up that she feels herself bitterly betrayed.

But though the girl is betrayed, so too is the boy, albeit in a less simple manner—by his trust in the benevolence of the surrounding world. When he first leaves the chatting women on the porch to follow a path into the woods, he halts once and looks back, seeing the women and unconsciously knowing them for what they are: the women for whom life—that inner life of joy and adventure—has stopped. They are "on the shelf," viewing experience from the outside, and their concern is with the civilized and conventional white houses. As the boy enters the woods, he sees under his feet the "brilliant, fallen leaves" and remembers his aunt's comment about them the day before, when she had returned from a walk; the entrance to the woods was "positively spectacular," she had said; but she had gone no further into the woods. The dazzling colors of the autumnal leaves were, like everything else for her, a matter for conversation. But in the boy's mind they are connected with the passion and excitement of the ripened moment, now when the two young people stand on the threshold of maturity, when their adolescent love has changed in its character. "It's different, isn't it?" the girl comments and, when she is questioned, replies, "Last time we were here the woods were just turning green." But after she has fallen from the ledge, the full comprehension of the plight of the leaves is left to the boy, who, running for help, understands them now, though only on the periphery of his own extremity:

He ran slower now, lurching sometimes from side to side, but he ran on. He ran and the brilliant, the wine-colored leaves crackled and broke under his feet. His mouth, a taut square, drew in, released whining breaths. His starting eyes fixed the ground, but he did not see the leaves that he ran over. He saw only the white houses that no matter how fast he ran kept always just ahead of him. If he did not hurry they would slide off the hill,

slide off and leave him running forever through these woods, over these dead leaves.

Time has frozen for the boy, and, with a nightmare-like clarity, he sees into the depths of his relationship with nature. He is engaged in an efforted and painful flight that takes him nowhere, with help from society beyond his reach. He is ineffectual and alone, and he sees that eternity could be like this one suspended moment. The fallen, brilliant leaves now are known for what they are: dead and dry bits of vegetation, cut off from their source; and likewise the boy must recognize the life of innocent joy and delight (the green leaves) irrecoverably gone and the dazzling and exciting life of adventure and passion (the brilliant leaves) heartbreakingly deceptive.

It has been written of Turgenev, whom out of the whole world of novelists Miss Gordon most resembles, that his women are strong, his men weak, and chance all-powerful. One might be tempted to substitute death (or time) for the word *chance* and to let the statement stand for Caroline Gordon's chief theme, particularly after a reading of "The Brilliant Leaves." But, though, as Mr. Lytle has suggested, the boy is inadequate to the girl in the grim drama, his inadequacy derives from his strength. Both are defeated by the conditions of human life—by being committed to nature, which carries within itself the principle of its own dissolution. The defeat is more painful in being of necessity solitary.

"The Brilliant Leaves" is almost parabolic, so clear, hard, and precise are its analogical formulations. And when we look back over Miss Gordon's novels, we realize that indeed it is a kind of parable, or—perhaps more properly—a dumb-show in which the events of the novels are acted out in shortened and pantomimic version. The constant set of events in all the novels revolves around man and woman, caught in mortality and seeking self-realization. Woman attempts to find fulfillment in love, whereas man looks outward to some aspect of "the world." Both become aware of their defeat at about the same time: a crisis may precipitate its sudden discovery, or it may lie hidden under the surface of an increasingly meaningless life. Two paths are open to the woman: to fall over the precipice into utter destruction, as does the girl in "The Brilliant Leaves," or to become one of the women on the porch, as does Miss Sally

Mainwaring in the same story. But the men must engage themselves in perpetual flight. And for both sexes, the common enemy Death is constantly at hand, and, as time wears on, increasingly more bold in revealing himself.

"This slow, intricate dance" (a phrase Miss Gordon has used to describe the action of the man and woman in Chekhov's "On the Road") is performed against so many backgrounds and is seen from so many perspectives that it is not at first apparent as her chief situation. Her first novel, *Penhally* (1931), for instance, has as its central action the attempt by Nicholas Llewellyn to hold intact the ancestral homeplace, established when the family came to Kentucky from Virginia. This principle, passed on by Nicholas to his nephew John, finds its final betrayal in the twentieth century, when John's elder grandson sells Penhally and is murdered by his outraged younger brother. But the mutual betrayal of lovers is a motif occurring throughout the book, coming more sharply into focus in John Llewellyn's life, however, than in any of the others. John's betrayal of his cousin Alice Blair is made clear in an important scene: the pair are caught out in a storm, and Alice willingly rides back with him through a flooded stream; she is almost swept away when her horse is stricken by panic, and yet the experience, for her, is the triumphant surrender of self to the man she trusts in love. But John never "speaks to her," never seizes from the flood of time that moment of commitment which, by open declaration, can be held against eternity. In his own mind he has yielded her to his cousin Charley; and after Charley is dead, when John has a second chance—and this event we see only through John's reconstruction of incidents—he lets her be swept from him toward the precipice, lost in a stream she cannot cross without help. And Lucy, whom he has won without opposition, without volition, chooses eventually to become one of the women on the gallery:

It was when the boy, Frank, was three years old that Lucy turned against him—as quietly and as surely as the bough that you have drawn aside swings back into place. He knew the very day, the hour, the minute even. A rainy day in early April. Coming by the woodpile in late afternoon he had filled a basket with chips and kindling and had taken them into the chamber, intending to make a blaze on the hearth. Lucy was there, the child in her



arms. A cold grey light, filtered through dripping boughs, filled the room. Kneeling on the hearth, arranging his kindling, he had anticipated the way the blaze would in a minute start up and light all the room.

According to John's account, he knows the cause of her withdrawal; he analyzes it as pride, as the desire to be desired. He does not see that pride is Lucy's last tool, seized in desperation, to protect herself from the anguish of further vulnerability. An action on his part would have changed reality, it seems to him; but he is too tired: "There was always somewhere in his mind a very deep pool of weariness." There is Alice, Penhally, the War—all these things have so fatigued him that he cannot raise his hands to halt Lucy's turning away.

John Llewellyn's defeat may conceivably be laid to the decline of a way of life to which he is loyal and from which he derives his strength (though I think not), but *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* (1934) provides a more detailed examination of man's commitment to the world and shows that it is *per se* foredoomed to failure, regardless of social or economic corruptions. Aleck Maury's commitment is to nature; at eight years he falls prey to the delusion that he can learn her secrets if he approaches her with loving and reverent service. His life is spent in a progressively more frantic pursuit which, at the end of the work, shows itself for what it is: a flight, in which he has become the hunted rather than the hunter.

Aleck Maury's passion for nature insulates him even from the decline of the Southern culture. He accommodates himself easily to the diminished interest in the study of the classics; and he views his real interest less as an inherited ritual than as a personal quest. His inability to face with equanimity the people he has known in the past does not stem from a nostalgia for an old way of life, but from a perception of the mutability inherent in the human condition. All Maury's memories are connected with the unbearable poignancy of the passage of time and the impending awareness of death: there is his first possum hunt, where he is brought face to face with the quarry and looks into "those burning eyes" for, it seems, an eternity before he hears the gunshot and sees the gray ball drop at his feet; there is Old Red, the fleet and cunning fox, who is at last caught by Old Whiskey, the champion foxhound. He sees death as an inexor-



able law of nature, not only between different kinds but within a species, when the quail cocks, shut up in a room together, kill each other in mass destruction. And, in the tragi-comic scene where the mare sinks slowly to the ground under Uncle Jack, who has with age become too fat to ride, Maury sees that death is inflicted not only from outside man, but also slowly and certainly from within. Time itself is death. And with this understanding comes an increased desire to spend his time in "the life of adventure and deep, secret excitement" that hunting and fishing bring to him.

Since the novel assumes the form of Maury's memoirs, we know nothing of Molly's feelings after their marriage, though they can be assumed from her reproach once when Maury showed himself more concerned over the prospect of losing Gyges, his dog, than Dick, their son. The death of the son several years later is the crisis destroying finally the unity of the two and causing in Molly the same turning away that was observed in Lucy. Molly lives through her grief essentially alone, and Maury is forced to record the barrier that exists between them from then on. "Yet I believe I loved him in my own way as much as Molly did," he writes. But hereafter Molly's inner life is no longer shared with him. She withholds from him the knowledge of her illness and dies with no word to him. Left alone and in possession, finally, of the freedom he has long sought, he finds it tasteless; he must scheme and plan to eke out his furtive glimmers of delight, but he finds only the hollowness of death waiting for him at every turn. Yet his defeat and betrayal are not the result of his changed methods in approaching nature; the planning and scheming are implicit from the first in Maury's passion. There is no ending possible for his drama except the cunning and flight of the hunted animal; Maury's merging of himself with the fox in the short story "Old Red" is an unconscious admission that he knows himself trapped in nature.

The "same set of events" is encountered again in Miss Gordon's Civil War novel *None Shall Look Back* (1937), although in it the marriage of Lucy Churchill and Rives Allard is of such short duration before Rives is killed at the Battle of Franklin that the ultimate "turning" is implied rather than realized. But in her dedication to her husband's love Lucy's daily

portion is death, just as, in his commitment to the defeated South, it is death itself that he serves. Rives dies a hero's death—a fate which throughout history has been considered a means of self-transcendence. Yet for Rives there is no triumph in giving himself, and this lack is not attributable to the defeat of his cause. At the time of his death Rives is in flight from life. Abstracted in his single-minded pursuit, he has cut himself off from Lucy's love and has looked too deeply into the natural order, where he has discovered the vanity of man's existence. A brief scene which he recalls later becomes an epiphany, revealing to him the nature of human life. Once, when his regiment had been forced to pass over a field of wounded soldiers, one man who had kindled a small fire turned his eyes for a moment on Rives' face:

The dark glance had been enigmatic but there had been in it a flicker of the hostility with which men look on at unbearable suffering. It was as if the man dying in the circle of the firelight could not endure the spectacle of the living, who were only riding toward death.

At the news of Rives' death, Lucy in amazement watches his mother weep. "She has never seen him die before," she thinks; and though she knows she should comfort the old woman, she cannot pull herself away from the window, where she stands looking out over the landscape (as did Lucy Llewellyn and Molly Maury before her):

The sun dropped behind the pines. She watched the light go from the sky and knew that when she saw the green fields of Kentucky again they would be as alien as the gullied pine-clad slopes outside the window.

Because she is a woman, she does not run, as Aleck Maury does, from time and nothingness; where he seeks frantically to justify himself in nature, she rejects the physical world and is alienated, actually, from the mortal condition.

Technically less proficient than her other novels—perhaps because it is her first full-length attempt in the modern idiom—*The Garden of Adonis* (1937) is nevertheless instructive of further aspects of Miss Gordon's central situation. Persistently present in it is the motif of woman's betrayal in love. In one plot, Idelle Sheeler, the daughter of shiftless poor whites, is like

Alice Blair in *Penhally* in choosing security rather than uncertain love. In the other plot of the novel, Letty Allard, a descendant of the Allard clan of *None Shall Look Back*, pursues a passionate affair with a married man, Jim Carter, to the inevitable flight together into the abyss of selfishness and sensuality. Letty is betrayed by herself, perhaps, as much as by Jim, but there are others he has known and injured in passing. In particular, with Sara, his wife, there has been that same moment of turning, when in her hurt and pride she refuses to admit her need for Jim and takes the path instead of withdrawal. The real cause of his elopement with Letty, however, is indicated in a comment made by his dentist:

"Nature," Ogden had said. "You see up to the time you're forty she's on your side. Everything is for building up . . . But after you pass forty or forty-five, after you get on the wrong side of the slope, it's different. Everything's giving way then. It's slow, so slow you can hardly notice what's happened from year to year, but it's going on all the time. It takes almost as long as the first building-up process and when it's finished you're old — or dead."

Miss Gordon has prefaced *The Garden of Adonis* with a passage from *The Golden Bough* explaining her title. The gardens of Adonis were baskets of earth in which the plants, tended by women, grew rapidly: "but having no root they withered as rapidly away, and at the end of eight days were carried out with the images of the dead Adonis and flung with them into the sea or into springs." The Southern land itself, of course, is a garden of Adonis: held by Ben Allard, Letty's father, against the mounting debt, it can supply no sustenance for the love between Ote Mortimer and Idelle Sheeler but can only provide a temporary nuptial couch for Letty and Jim. But since the defeat and destruction of these characters are attributable to causes in no way peculiar to a specific locale—nor even generically to a declining society—the idea is suggested to us that nature itself is the inadequate garden, since it cannot sustain and nourish man, the essentially rootless plant.

*Green Centuries* (1941) has as its enveloping action the westward movement into Kentucky just before the American Revolution. Miss Gordon quotes on one of the section pages of this novel a passage from a letter of Flaubert mentioning

"the innate loathing of life which compelled [barbarian tribes] to abandon their country as if abandoning themselves." It is this flight to which Orion Outlaw is committed, lured on by the kind of dream that only men such as he and Daniel Boone can have. But by the last chapter, though American settlers have established and held a new community in Indian territory, Rion, "the mighty hunter," reflects on the futility of man's conquests:

His father had come west across the ocean, leaving all that he cared about behind. And he himself as soon as he had grown to manhood had looked at the mountains and could not rest until he knew what lay beyond them. But it seemed that a man had to flee farther each time and leave more behind him and when he got to the new place he looked up and saw Orion fixed upon his burning wheel, always pursuing the bull but never making the kill . . . Were not men raised into the westward turning stars only after they had destroyed themselves?

Of all the women in Miss Gordon's novels, Cassy is most pathetic. She loves her husband with the terrible certainty of the pure-hearted, yet her courage, endurance, and unselfishness bring her nothing but bitter annihilation in the new country, at her husband's side. Before she leaves Virginia, after surrendering herself to Rion, a visit to her father's grave gives her an insight into the implications of mortality: bemused, gazing down at the grave, she sees the red earth and the vegetation as a thin veil, hiding the white bones at the bottom of the pit. Years later, when she "turns" against her husband, screaming as Rion had once seen a horse scream when it was trapped by high water, he accepts the inevitability of the event: "It had come then. He had always known it would, when he stopped to think about it, and yet he had always felt safe minute by minute." Love such as Cassy's is a gift, he recognizes, and since it is not in the order of nature, it can be withdrawn. But nothing short of hurtling over the precipice would have made Cassy withdraw her love.

In *The Women on the Porch* (1944) can be seen for the first time the proper order and arrangement of the events to form the complete pattern of Caroline Gordon's "plot." Marriage itself—in its idea and its actuality—is the subject of this novel; the enveloping action and the other characters are shaped around the drama of Catherine and Jim Chapman. The same set of events occurs, but the temporal pattern—which in her

other works Miss Gordon has shown as ending in the observable motifs of withdrawal, flight, and death—is seen in this novel to have its roots in eternity.

The two alternatives which Miss Gordon's women choose—the cliff or the gallery—face Catherine Chapman when she discovers her husband's infidelity: fleeing New York, she is directed by her intellect to the desperate waters of the Mississippi but by her unconscious will to Swan Quarter, her family home in Tennessee, where, fighting her way through the brambles, she faces the women on the porch. They who have turned aside sit there in their despair, in their courage, and in their fear. Cousin Daphne, insulted and injured by the desertion of her husband on her wedding night, wanders the woodland to pluck with esoteric craft the benevolent mushroom from its fatal counterfeit. Miss Willy, whose life is one of immolation without joy, endures for the purpose of enduring. And Old Miss Kit, recognizing that death is at hand—"has been all along"—faces only the horror of ceaseless wandering without identity. And behind them, like a black shadow, is old Aunt Maria, a sort of inverse Virgin Mary, with her husband Uncle Joe and her martyred son Jesse. (Aunt Maria's love of her son and participation in his "crucifixion" bring her only bitterness; and her second sight is into sin, not grace.) A new possibility comes to Catherine, however, out of the land of her ancestors: the life of fertility and meaning which first bursts upon her in the presence of a beautiful red stallion, virgin yet but ready to stand, seeming both the product and the progenitor of nature. In the prospect of marrying Tom Manigault, her cousin and the owner of the neighboring quarter, Catherine recognizes her chance for the simple earthy pleasures: "It is the life I was made for," she thinks, "the life which I have always missed."

It is part of the workings of the novel to show that both Tom and the stallion are flawed: the horse, stepped on by his mother soon after his birth, was nursed back to health and apparent soundness by Miss Willy and Mr. Shannon, who is for Miss Willy the counterpart of Tom Manigault; Tom, injured by his mother's rejection when he was young, is unable to love the land or a woman without constraint. Tom and the stallion represent nature, which in its fallen and wounded state turns in upon itself instead of reflecting its creator. And Catherine,

caught up in that nature, repudiates it, arising from the sylvan couch she thought to call her wedding bed to find herself lost in the woods: "I have made a mistake," she thinks; "I have taken the wrong road . . ."

The husband she has left in New York, Jim Chapman, a professor of history, has been misled—by middle age, by fatigue, by rootlessness—into a half-hearted love affair. At Catherine's turning away from him—an actual geographical movement, dramatizing her withdrawal, which the women in Miss Gordon's novels set in the past would have found socially castigable—Jim is cut off and isolated, and like the boy in "The Brilliant Leaves" he can only run toward the white houses seeking for help. The first page of the *Divine Comedy*, however, viewed in a discussion with college students, is his first step toward self-knowledge:

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself  
in a dark wood where the straight way was lost.

Seeking Catherine, he comes to Swan Quarter fatigued and ineffectual, and, confronted with his wife's unfaithfulness, he attempts to strangle her in an attempt to prevent his total engulfment in nothingness. His hands seem to have a life of their own, a fact indicating the almost total separation in him of body and spirit, and without Catherine's urgency to save him (not herself) he would have killed her.

That their marriage cannot be destroyed is the one overwhelming reality with which Jim and Catherine are left: not his adultery nor hers, nor the desire of either, nor physical violence can destroy the ties that bind them together. Both have had inklings of this indissolubility apart; the knowledge has come to them in dreams and images. An unconscious perception that one has committed oneself for eternity in marriage comes to Chapman when he recalls a friend's dream that she and her husband had mounted an elevated railway to find the rails extending into infinity. In one of Catherine's dreams, in which she must conduct a dead man safely through a dark tunnel to a grave, "from which, it was hoped, he would rise," she is told that she must be careful, that the safety of the man depends on her alone. But the actuality of their bond is revealed to them in the simple ceremony of making coffee together after their

storm of self-concern has passed. By her humbling of pride in not turning away irrevocably and by his refusal to take flight, they destroy the natural barriers which time throws up to isolate man in a finite world.

Mr. Lytle has spoken of Miss Gordon's failure to make us believe in the reconciliation of Jim Chapman and his wife, designating this one flaw as a crack in her otherwise faultless structure. This apparent lack of motive does seem indeed a crack, though perhaps it would be better to call it an aperture, through which something supernatural enters into the dramatic framework of the novel. We do not need to believe in the vitality of Catherine's and Jim's love for each other, since it is not the strength of their love which brings them back together but something which results from the sacrament of their bond. And since Miss Gordon does not desert her naturalistic method, this supernatural intrusion can be surmised only from the apparently powerful mutual change of heart and from the controlling symbols within the whole work.

The symbol of water as both destruction and salvation permeates the novel. By the healing effect of water Jim Chapman is saved in his crisis: both aspects of water are at hand for him to choose—the black, still pool in which to fling himself, or the fresh, clear spring. It is death by water Catherine seeks, on her way to Swan Quarter, coming with a surfeit of pain and loss and an unrecognized thirst for salvation. She intends to drive past Swan Quarter through Nashville to Atlanta, to New Orleans and on into the muddy water:

But it would not stay yellow. Swirling over your head, it would change, to blue, to green, to purple laced with foam. *Where'er thy bones are hurled.*

Here is expressed her unconscious insight into the transformation worked by water. And though both Jim and Catherine picture Time as a flood which engulfs and destroys them, they are aware too of the gentle, healing power of water. Both are attracted to "the lady tree" (symbol of the Mediatrix of grace) standing by the spring at Swan Quarter, out of which Catherine herself has swept the debris—the spring that can convert destruction into balm.

The vanquishing of Jim's brutal hands is a foreshadowing



of the death of the stallion, the carnal element that must be shattered before grace may grow. The last words of the novel, "We'll bury him when it's light, and then we'll go," are profoundly reverberatory, revealing the events of the novel as the agonies of childbirth rather than of death. The characters are looking toward dawn now, whereas when Catherine first came to Swan Quarter, everything was seen "under a western light." Emphasized also in this last sentence is the idea that though conversion may have taken place, the process of enlightenment is not yet accomplished; action and growth will occur after "it's light" and the old, sinful self is buried.

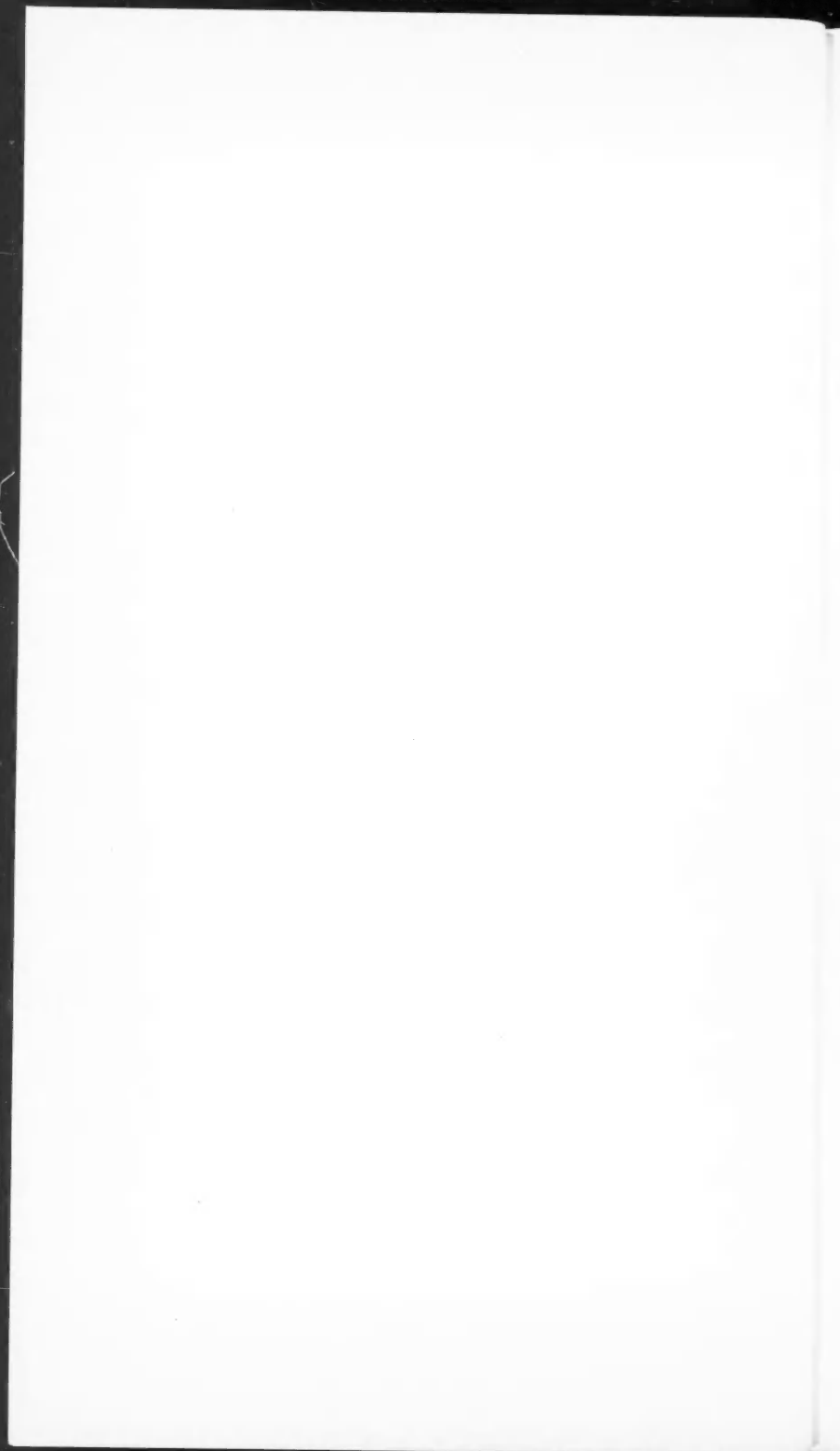
*The Women on the Porch*, then, completes the sequence of events inchoate in the other novels so that one can perceive the "one story" Miss Gordon has been writing about all along: man's search for grace in a fallen world. According to orthodox Christian theology, grace is the supernatural life of the soul, the more abundant life of which Christ spoke, the participation in the life of God. It is this plenitude which Adam lost in the fall, and it is the lack of this plenitude which nature suffers in its present wounded state. The life everlasting for which the soul yearns is not to be found in mere human love, nor in nature, nor in the pursuit of new horizons but in the life with Christ in God. Nature, though not entirely cut off from God, because of its ambiguity cannot without grace afford man a path to salvation. As Jean Mouroux has written (in *The Meaning of Man*): "Nature will always set before us both the Dionysian and the Christian lesson, because she is big with both possibilities and because it is for man to actualize the one or the other, saving or submerging the creation in the act of fulfilling himself."

In the writings preceding *The Women on the Porch* Miss Gordon's characters are defeated in their attempts to fulfill themselves (and to redeem creation) because they flee from their finiteness and thus do not prepare by utter self-immolation the ground into which the gratuitous gift of grace can enter. The last two novels, however, include in their scope the operations of grace, as opposed to nature alone and unaided. *The Strange Children*, much more overtly than *The Women on the Porch*, delineates the workings of grace in the soul, since in it the religious theme is apparent and undisguised. This change rather than any subsidiary one indicates clearly that Caroline Gordon



has entered upon a new stage of artistic productivity: and though it would be arrant presumption to predict what the writing to come will be like, one can now with some feeling of completeness survey the work leading to this point. In it Caroline Gordon shows us a world made up of people who "worship nature, not the God of nature," whose mouths speak vanity and whose hands do falsehood. But in each, and successively less mute, is the cry "Rid me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children."

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**Caroline  
Gordon:  
The  
Special Yield**

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN

Of Caroline Gordon's eight works of fiction, her second, *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* (1934), is the most illuminating; it tells us much about her primary concerns, as well as the major symbols and devices she employs to actualize them. Aleck Maury, who appears or is mentioned in two other books, is a person of special interest because the singleness of his dedication to a way of life acts as a major paradigm of explanation; to see him as clearly and as uncompromisingly as he sees himself is to realize Miss Gordon's special vision of the South as well as her relation to certain of her Southern contemporaries. For Maury is the priest attending with an almost fanatic persistence to his rituals. The religion is itself a worship of nature, a worship conducted according to clearly defined limits of definition and significance.

The value of this novel for a review of Miss Gordon's work should eventually become clear, even though superficially Maury's narrow interests seem scarcely related to the Civil War heroics and the post-Civil War confusion of her other books. Even allowing for a certain ironic indulgence she seems to have for an old man's obstinate attachments, Miss Gordon's loving portrayal of the "sportsman" has a number of deep reasons for its persistent and patient attention to the details of Maury's

obsessions. The most important of these is that it offers a fixed image of reality, a spatial image which incorporates all time and history within its range and scope. It is the image of a deep blue pool, a "miracle pool," in an out-of-the-way place, fed timelessly by cool streams; in the bottom of it are fish of a special quality and brilliance. This nature image (it has its several forms in the novel) is the very last word in a pre-civilized or supra-civilized vision. While it is a place, or is *in* a place, it is not necessarily fixed geographically; in fact, Maury moves several times across the Southern land to enrich his experience of its variety.

This is not a sentimental primitivism, this search for the best, the least disturbed, the purest site; it is rather the most realistically and solidly based essay at essential definition. Maury is remarkably well informed in the details of fishing and hunting, and he works hard at the mastery of their demands. While he is professor of Greek and Latin at one academy or another, he divides his time neatly between teaching and the outdoor life, and his "study" is a place for keeping fishing tackle. He is gravely insulted when a woman in Florida suggests he attend lectures "to pass the time." The notion that fishing is an amiable waste of time or merely a way of filling the hours angers him. Nor does he consider the sport a means of arriving more nearly at a mystic vision of either the past or immortality. It is a business, an occupation, whose challenge has infinite variety to one who really understands. Compared with it, the life of a scholar is only bearable, the literary life intolerably boring. Neither of these gets beyond the words; neither communicates intelligibly the actuality of experience.

Associated intimately with the deep pool is the ritual of hunting — a sport that Aleck Maury agrees reluctantly to give up as he grows old because it demands more energy than he can command. The training of hounds, the impatient waiting for Novembers, the careful plotting of the fox's course, most of all the restraint of the hunt which prevents the kill and prolongs the rite — all of these make of the hunt a special kind of experience. As fishing is for the most part an experience in loneliness, hunting is a community ritual. There are always three generations engaged in it: The oldest in retrospect, the middle in ritualized action, the young in initiatory expectation. The

hunt gives to Miss Gordon's novel a sense of time, as fishing arranges its meaning in space; neither, however, violates the purity of definition which is the burden of Aleck Maury's significance. Both help to establish the limits of Miss Gordon's world. They are the explicit (in Maury's case) or implicit beginnings of historical interpretation and social criticism. They involve several extremely interesting and curious insights into her treatment of the South and its history.

For Miss Gordon life needs to move in an orderly fashion from the fixed point of a patterned and naturally pure world toward a more stylized, a more formally ordered world. But the progress from natural purity to formal and traditional order is never hurried, or shouldn't be. Nor should the consequences of such movement in time be artificial or dishonest or affected. One of the best clues to Miss Gordon's point of view is found in her occasional discussions of architecture: the cabins built in the slow moves West of *Green Centuries* (as well as the clearings made for farming; the orderly cutting of trees in pioneering is a form of architecture, of "building"); the growth of the Brackets' plantation house in Virginia (*None Shall Look Back*, 1937) and of Penhally (*Penhally*, 1931); the contrast of the functionally appropriate Lewis farmhouse with Elsie Manigault's grotesque and alien manorhouse (*The Women on the Porch*, 1944; a similar contrast occurs in *The Garden of Adonis*, 1937). The proper architecture describes the growth of families and of tradition; memory and need are the sinews of tradition. The great achievement in cultural honesty in this kind of history is to civilize according to need and never beyond the limits set by need. This is the best means of governing taste. Aleck Maury is above all the arbiter of such taste; he is quite arbitrarily censorious of even the slightest pretension (his daughter's purchase of a house because of its decorative mantel shelf, etc.). Throughout her fiction, Miss Gordon's judgment of a basic taste and a simple tradition follows closely along these lines.

This need not be a falsely simple way of seeing the past, but it is true that it can lead to awkward confusions in historical narrative. A more than negligible fault in her fiction comes from a double view. The *place* is understandably simple; one sees it in an almost geographically pure line from Virginia to

Kentucky and Tennessee. In the earliest days it is viewed as a succession of clearings as men move West for one reason or another. (As epigraph for Part One of *Green Centuries*, she cites Daniel Boone: "I think it time to remove when I can no longer fall a tree for fuel so that its top will lie within a few yards of my cabin.") On the other hand, the people of her fiction are often a scarcely differentiated family mass; they are held to lines of descent from the world's human beginnings, and they lack complexity. Even those (Catherine Lewis, Letty Allard, Jim Carter) who serve and suffer tensions are not more than complicated persons, whose sufferings are absorbed in a larger thematic complaint. Many of her novels have this fault: *Green Centuries*, *Penhally*, and *None Shall Look Back* have a clutter of personalities instead of a wealth of characters. One is never sure that any of them is quite self-sufficiently revealed, only that he serves to add to an inventory of themes.

These themes are as various and as conventional as Miss Gordon's concerns with her region and family would lead us to expect. Some of them are the result of a sweeping look at the South's history: the Civil War's challenge to loyalties, the economic pressures it brought to bear upon families and estates, family divisions and declines, the postwar struggle to restore the land, the Northern pressure upon the South. Some of them seem more closely associated with her own experience and family history: the stresses and strains of marriage with a scholar-intellectual, the conflict between the "New York" mind and the country life and temperament, the division of interest from one generation to the next. Many of them are trivial clichés, and especially such reflections of the 1920's as one sees in *The Garden of Adonis*; or they come too simply from the agrarian position assumed by her husband and his contemporaries.

These are not necessarily damaging circumstances. Indeed, as they are a product of mature reflection upon actual experience and the reality of history, they are valuable rehearsals of the human drama. But they are too often insufficiently explored; the line of narrative development is not always as deep or as complex as it might have been. Such a novel as *The Garden of Adonis*, for example, is remarkably successful on its surface, and its surface is very complicated; but the ways

and means of extending the line of story from one area to another of its implications are clichés of interpretation. The young son of a tenant farmer comes back from three years of industrial work in Detroit determined to make a go of farming; he becomes obsessed by the need to "make a crop," but is prevented by a calamitous drouth; in a series of frustrations, he loses his fiancée to a bootlegger with ready cash and easy promise, and he quite insanely kills his very good and sensible landlord. At the other extreme of the novel's structure a young man (Jim Carter) of fatal charm and moral weakness becomes involved with the family of a Northern industrialist, who has moved South to take advantage of cheap labor. The young man is himself a symbol of the decline of Southern courage, in his giving in to the false attractiveness of "Northern" wealth and busyness. There is much said about the folly and superficiality of youth, and the clichés of 1920's society are used for documentation. One is never sure why Carter "defects"; nor can one quite determine if his weakness is native to him or a consequence of his having turned away from the "Southern" life and toward the industrial North. The victim of both extremes of the novel's range is the debt-ridden Ben Allard, who would seem to be the Southern hero manqué and is so handicapped by negatives of characterization that his death is less a tragic resolution than an unhappy accident of misdirected passion.

The most satisfactory of all her thematic concerns is the conflict between the sportsman and the intellectual. Extended, this may also involve the range of dissimilarity affecting the agrarian theorist and the urban sophisticate. Or it may involve us in the contemplation of adult absurdities through the mind of a child (*The Strange Children*, 1951). At the basis of all of these possibilities is the temperament of Aleck Maury and his knowledgeable respect for the sportsman's rituals. Aleck Maury is the true heir of the "whole man" of Southern history. He knows his Greek and Latin but does not exploit them, even though eventually they become a merely useful adjunct to the real life of the sportsman. The point of difference comes in the children: the boy, who might have been a companion, is drowned in one of Maury's deep pools; and the daughter turns away from the world of his satisfactions, to another. He has respect for her choice, sometimes ironically indulgent, at other

times awkwardly sincere. But there is always a feeling of uncertainty concerning the meaning of this division of interest: who is the child and who the adult? The question is never satisfactorily answered. For Lucy Lewis (Maury's granddaughter) who suffers the boredom of adult chatter in *The Strange Children*, it is obvious that the intellectual is a tedious fool. And in this novel the mind of the child and the taste of the sportsman are one: "When anyone bored him or interfered with his pleasures in any way he went right off and left them. She wondered what he would do if he had to stay there, the way she did, and sit around for hours, listening to them talk." But this is, after all, a child's simplicity condemning from intolerance and ignorance. The world of adults is more complex than she will give it credit for being; it is certainly more complex than Maury wishes to think it.

If Miss Gordon's portrait of the adult intellectual (the historian, the professor, the poet) is something less than flattering, that is, after all, a part of her criticism. For the intellectual is after all a man of truncated experience. There is a brief glimpse, in *The Women on the Porch*, of Hart Crane, "a stubble-haired, pop-eyed fellow, who seemed to live only for poetry and had ended his life when it failed him." Something of this inadequacy haunts most of the intellectuals among Miss Gordon's characters — a failure, really, of passionate commitment, which makes them seem like "strange children" to Lucy Lewis and suspiciously foolish or inept to Aleck Maury. The estranged husband of *The Women on the Porch* realizes this in himself as he goes to recover his wife. Words have got in the way of both past and present experience. He is a professor of history in New York City, but his wife has come from a Tennessee family that is secure even in adversity because of a sustaining tradition.

Miss Gordon's fiction describes a remarkable range of achievement and failure. *Aleck Maury*, *Sportsman* and the Maury stories in *The Forest of the South* (1945) are wonderfully sharp and wise, and occasionally illuminated by remarkable flashes of symbolic realization. *Green Centuries* is extraordinarily restrained; Miss Gordon is forever on her guard to prevent its becoming an "historical romance," and it is fully informed with museum-like details of the pioneer experience. *The Women on the Porch* is often skillful; *The Strange Children*



has many amusing ironies, even though its point of view more often gets in the way of adult fact than it helps to enrich it.

It is when we most expect her to succeed that she often fails. *Penhally* would seem to have been her best opportunity; but this story of a hundred years or so of a family experience is a hopeless *mélange* of characters and history. The narrative stumbles about in the past and the past-before-the-past; the incidents are monotonously told, the characters crowd the scenes; their significance, too obvious at the beginning, becomes too tedious before the end. Except that it sometimes takes good advantage of its Civil War setting, *None Shall Look Back* is similarly handicapped, and is too easily aided by loyalties and sympathies too simply purchased.

Nevertheless, the eight books leave a remarkable impression. They are, in their own way, and notwithstanding their defects, a fictional parallel of John Crowe Ransom's poem, "Antique Harvesters." In the third stanza, Ransom speaks of "one spot" of the land as having "a special yield," quite different from the meagre harvest otherwise described. It is the "yield" of a tradition aesthetically realized and obstinately treasured, imaged in the ritual fox hunt and the worshipful gestures of harvesting in later stanzas. Miss Gordon acknowledges a similar "yield" from tradition. It comes from a vision of life seen often in starkly simple terms and thus made the focus of an historical interpretation of human society. Not that she is a Southern writer, but that she has a sense of the South's total character, from which she can draw much strength and an agreeable variety. Aleck Maury's vision of life is never very far from the terror of death. He resents any trivial interference with the clarity of either admission. At the risk of over-simplifying and thus making the complex merely complicated, Miss Gordon applies his conviction to a large area of shared experience in the South.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



# The Novel Of Experience

WILLIAM VAN O'CONNOR

As we all know, many of the modern novelist's preoccupations with form derive from Henry James. We even speak of the Jamesian novel, which Joseph Warren Beach describes as the turning of "pictorial matter into drama by straining it through the consciousness of the leading character." James's formal considerations, as the collected prefaces (*The Art of the Novel*) show, are many and significant. By the Jamesian novel we also mean such complicated intellectual and moral conflicts as may be involved in a particular and rarefied social world. It doesn't follow, of course, that everyone in the Jamesian tradition writes about a "rarefied social world." James's protagonists come to understand deceit, the seamy side of motives, the urgency of time, the importance of vivid experience—they reconcile their innocent vision with the world as it is, and they compromise with the high expectations they had had for themselves. James wrote what might be called the novel-of-experience, quite distinct, say, from the Conradian novel, struggling to understand the very substructure of a civilization, or the Joycean novel, presenting the mind in all its layers of light and darkness. The phrase novel-of-experience may suggest too much, be too loose as a category. Even so, it helps to define a line in 20th century American fiction that is quite as distinct,

and is perhaps equally as important, as the novel-of-violence.

Certain of James's shorter works, "The Lesson of the Master" and "The Beast in the Jungle" are clearly stories of experience. In the former, St. George, a gifted novelist, sacrifices his talent to "success" and to domestic comforts. He advises an equally gifted younger man, Paul Overt, not to involve himself domestically, but to dedicate himself to his art. The young man follows this advice; but when he returns to London, two years later, with a completed manuscript he finds events have taken a most curious turn. He learns that St. George has been widowed and then married to Miss Fancourt, the beautiful young lady he himself had, with great difficulty, given up! At first Overt is outraged and feels that St. George has taken him in, but he has a conversation with St. George and the latter convinces him that he had given him sincere advice. Overt has achieved what he had hoped to achieve as a writer. St. George has not. Despite the literary achievements, however, Paul Overt will live with half a suspicion that the older man, who says he has ceased to write, is mocking him. The story, in the narrator's summary, ends thus:

When the new book came out in the autumn Mr. and Mrs. St. George found it really magnificent. The former still has published nothing, but Paul doesn't even yet feel safe. I may say for him, however, that if this event were to occur he would perhaps be the very first to appreciate it: which is perhaps a proof that the Master was essentially right and that Nature had dedicated him to intellectual, not to personal passion.

The story would seem to say that moral dedication can never be entirely pure. Clinging to motives are ironic perplexities, ambiguities of intention. In "The Beast in the Jungle" romantic expectations are subjected to the most unromantic of ironies: the protagonist has so exaggerated an idea of what destiny holds in store for him that he cannot even imagine what it might be; ultimately he learns that exactly nothing is in store for him. He is left with the painful realization that he has been a fool. He has missed ordinary happiness, experience, while waiting for something spectacularly above the ordinary.

Perhaps the essential quality in Edith Wharton, James's immediate follower, is the ironic pleasure to be found in de-

feat and in compromise. In *The Fruit of the Tree* she wrote: "Life is not a matter of abstract principles, but a succession of pitiful compromises with fate, of concessions to old traditions, old beliefs, old tragedies, old failures." She was especially concerned with the compromises called for in marriage, and with the fact that duty allowed one a superior, though sometimes grimmer, joy than that to be found in romance itself. *Ethan Frome*, it should be said, has in it almost no joy at all; duty is served, as the situation demands that it be, through long and painful years. In *The Age of Innocence*, on the other hand, the joy is muted rather than grim. Although sorely tempted, Newland Archer refuses to leave his wife May for the exotic Ellen Olenska, whom he loves very deeply. Twenty-odd years later, when he is a widower, Archer thinks back over his life:

His days were full, and they were filled decently. He supposed it was all a man ought to ask.

Something he knew he had missed: the flower of life. But he thought of it now as a thing so unattainable and improbable that to have repined would have been like despairing because one had not drawn the first prize in a lottery . . . He had been what is called a faithful husband; and when May had suddenly died—carried off by the infectious disease through which she had nursed their youngest child—he had honestly mourned her. Their long years together had shown him that it did not so much matter if marriage was a dull duty; lapsing from that, it became a mere battle of ugly appetites. Looking about him, he honoured his own past, and mourned for it. After all, there was good in the old ways.

The last chapter is not, as certain of Edith Wharton's critics have said, an ironic presentation of a man who had sacrificed happiness to conservative conventions. Mrs. Wharton agrees that his conduct was the only moral action possible to him. There is story after story in which she finds her conflict in the indulgence of one's own desires at the expense of someone else. In "The Reckoning," from *The Descent of Man*, a woman says: "If we don't recognize an inner law . . . the obligation that love creates . . . being loved as well as loving . . . there is nothing to prevent our spreading ruin unhindered."

Willa Cather, unlike Mrs. Wharton, was not preoccupied with romantic love as opposed to duty, but she was preoccu-

pied with life as commonplace experience, compromise, and reconciliation with hard circumstance. *The Professor's House* is an anti-romantic novel. It is sometimes read as a story of a family made mean-spirited and selfish by money, and there is some justification for such a reading. Professor St. Peter's receiving a large award for his series of historical studies enables him to build a new house, much more sumptuous than the one he had rented for twenty-odd years. St. Peter dislikes ostentation but his wife is rather given to it, and the house occasions grave disagreements which finally estrange them. In Tom Outland, killed in World War I, St. Peter had had a brilliant student, a close friend, and almost a son-in-law. Outland, who had made an important scientific discovery, left a will in favor of Rosamund St. Peter, the professor's daughter; and her husband, Louis Marsellus, exploits the discovery. The consequences of the wealth of the young couple are many: quarrels between St. Peter and his wife, jealousy and strained relations between Rosamund and her sister Kathleen, difficulties between St. Peter and his daughters, a colleague's ugly recriminations and lawsuit, the near-suicide of St. Peter, and so on.

The various episodes of the novel do suggest the theme that money corrupts. Yet insofar as it is St. Peter's story — "his" story — the theme is deeper than this. After his near-suicide St. Peter examines his life. There had been two great excitements in it: an intensely romantic love for his wife, and the delight in writing a highly original history of the Spanish explorations. Estranged from his wife and having finished his work, he was suddenly empty. And this emptiness had allowed him to welcome the half-accident that nearly ended his life.

The lives of two other people, Tom Outland's and that of Augusta, the seamstress, teach St. Peter he can face the future "without joy, without passionate griefs," and even find it pleasant. Early in *The Professor's House* we learn that Mrs. St. Peter had been jealous of her husband's friendship with Outland and had used Outland's reticence about certain events in his life to justify her dislike of him. When we learn the reason for the reticence, however, we find it not to Outland's discredit. His story, briefly, is this: An orphan, he had been befriended by a man named Roddy, ten years his senior; and together as cow-punchers in New Mexico they had stumbled on an ancient,

pre-historic Indian village. There are many beautiful descriptions of the village, interesting speculations on the sort of civilization it must have held, and, in sum, a fine evocation of mankind's part in the eternal march. Outland had gone to Washington for assistance in bringing the village to people's attention, and his discouraging reception there had caused Roddy to sell many of the moveable objects to a German museum. Outland, upon his return, berates Roddy, who had not understood his friend's sense of piety about the village, and Roddy, greatly hurt, leaves. Outland, in relating the story, says: "Anyone who requites faith and friendship as I did, will have to pay for it. I'm not very sanguine about good fortune for myself. I'll be called to account when I least expect it." To Professor St. Peter the story signifies two things: the importance as Outland put it of "faith and friendship," as well as the humble place of the individual in the great expanse of time, and one's need therefore to restrict one's hopes and anticipations.

The life of Augusta is a far cry from the romance of Outland's life. This physical description of her suggests something about the quality of her life: "She herself was tall, large-boned, flat and stiff, with a plain, solid face and brown eyes not destitute of fun." Psychologically, Augusta is a strong character. She is disappointed that her life has not had more romance in it, but she does not sentimentalize her misfortunes. Her strength is suggested by her attitude toward death: "While she ate a generous breakfast, she would reply to his polite questions about the illness or funeral with befitting solemnity, and then go readily to another topic, not holding to the dolorous note. He used to say that he didn't mind hearing Augusta announce these deaths which seemed to happen so frequently along her way, because her manner of speaking about it made death seem less uncomfortable." It is to Augusta that St. Peter turns, or, rather, to his understanding of her: "If he had thought of Augusta sooner, he would have got up from the couch sooner," that is, he wouldn't have encouraged the "accident" that almost caused his death. Although his relations with his family had been seriously injured, "There was still Augusta . . . a world full of Augustas, with whom one was outward bound."

Katherine Anne Porter, not unlike Miss Cather, has frequently found her themes in the contrast between the dream and

the fact. In the novelette, "Old Mortality," Miranda is disillusioned by the falseness she discovers in the "history" of her family. She sees these distortions or transformations as pitiful attempts to hide the truth, and decides that she will, at least, face the truth. The story concludes: "'I will know the truth,' she said, in her youth, in her ignorance." In "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," Death is the antagonist. A love story, it has as its setting the later days of World War I. Miranda, the heroine, recovers from influenza to discover that Adam, her lover, has also caught it—and died. The war ends and there is much celebrating, but the victory is celebrated thus by Miranda:

No more war, no more plague, only the dazed silence that follows the ceasing of the heavy guns; noiseless houses with the shades drawn, empty streets, the dead cold light of tomorrow. Now there would be time for everything.

Caroline Gordon, Miss Porter's fellow Southerner, is able to cast a cold eye on excesses, to compare expectation with event, theory with experience, and especially to show us Time as antagonist. Her fine novel *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* may be considered as almost the prototype of the novel-of-experience. Aleck Maury, professor of Latin, is the humane, disciplined man. He admires the dignity of classical poetry, and he admires the discipline necessary to the first rate fisherman. He is preoccupied with Time and refuses to waste a moment of it, but he has no moralistic notions about activity being the devil's adversary or work being somehow virtuous in and for its own sake. He brings his talent for fishing to perfection because that activity best enables him to live fully and humanely. Public notions of success and magnificence he rejects. He will enjoy the blue sky, the contour of hills, patches of woods, and the flowing water. He lives for delight, but a delight he has earned:

When I had finished eating I went out on the porch and lit my pipe. It was still light when I went out. I sat there until nearly midnight and during those four or five hours I engaged, I imagine, in more introspection than in all the rest of my life put together. I knew suddenly what it was I had lived by, from the time when, a mere child, I used to go out into the woods at night hunting with a negro man. I remembered—it must have been when I was about eight—looking up in black woods into the deep, glowing eyes of the quarry and experiencing a peculiar, an al-



most transfiguring excitement. I had experienced it for the first time that night long ago in the woods at Oakleigh and I had been seeking and finding it, with mounting excitement, ever since. I had known from the first that it was all luck; I had gone about seeking it, with, as it were, the averted eyes of a savage praying to his god. But I had brought all my resources to bear on the chase. I had used skill and caution—nobody but myself knew what patience I had always expended on my careful preparations for my sport—and I had succeeded as few men, I told myself now with some arrogance, had ever succeeded . . .

There is a scene near the end of the novel that might seem merely pleasant description, but it is much more than that; it is a seventy-year-old man looking back on a highly successful life:

The river coming into view between banks covered with cane described a sharp bend, then widened out into a broad still pool. I went over to the rail and looked down. Farther up the water had a perceptible current but here under the bridge it flowed so gently that the eye could hardly detect the movement. And it was of the most lovely pellucid green I have ever looked upon.

The novelists cited in this brief survey have been mostly women, and one might infer that the novel-of-experience is most frequently written by women. This may be so, but there are a number of men novelists who also fit the category, notably Glenway Wescott and James Gould Cozzens. Westcott's *The Pilgrim Hawk*, for example, develops the theme that even excesses of involvement are preferable to non-involvement, and Cozzens's quiet but deeply intelligent novel *The Just and the Unjust* shows us a young lawyer in a small town learning to accept human (jury) justice as opposed to the letter of the law. There are, of course, other novels and other novelists who might be listed.

Wright Morris, who writes this same sort of fiction, once said in an interview that too much modern fiction depends on shock and violence. "In the name of so-called realism writers like James Jones are victimized by the notion that absolute photographic realism is an art form. What they're employing is exposure. The very techniques of exposure require use of shock which invariably cancels out the depth and wider meaning

of the subject or the experience. The author suffers most from this; he is cut off from the depth and fullness of his own material." Presumably Morris is not saying that the novel-of-violence is invariably without depth, for that would deny thoughtfulness to such violent novels as *Light in August* and *As I Lay Dying*, or *All the King's Men* and *World Enough and Time*, but merely that the photographically realistic novel denying itself depth feels the need of shock. And all literature, of course, contains some degree of thought, but Morris' point, by extension, would suggest that the novel-of-experience stands or falls by the very quality of its thoughtfulness.

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## The Shifting Point of View: Joyce's "The Dead" and Gordon's "Old Red"

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In what follows, I shall not be talking about influences in the conventional, or demonstrable, sense. I am interested in a force far subtler and more pervasive than the echoed phrase, the imitated character. I am interested in how two writers of our time have drawn upon the traditions of skill and artistry—in the strict and honorific sense of the term, the *professional* traditions—that make up their craft.

If I should learn that Miss Gordon read "The Dead" only after she had finished writing "Old Red" (published in 1933—we have conclusive evidence that Miss Gordon had studied "The Dead" before the publication of *The House of Fiction* in 1950), I should be at least mildly surprised, but hardly disappointed. For my present thesis does not go beyond this: here are two writers who in two stories have achieved great freedom, power, and humanity—as well as great subtlety. The skillful manipulation of point of view has helped create much of that freedom and power and humanity—as well as that subtlety. It is, in fact, almost an accident that we look at Joyce, the earlier writer, first.

Joyce, as a working craftsman, must have sensed the value of the sustained point of view. He must have sensed that seeing with one pair of eyes, experiencing with one mind and

one sensitivity, reacting with one total human history, could often simplify, though not of course actually solve, the problems of both reader and writer. Here is a crude and obvious example: the reader does not constantly need to change his psychological and emotional orientation to empathize with different personalities. More than this, he shares every stage of perception and discovery, of error and correction, with the observer in the story. For in this fictional method at its purest, as in our daily lives, we never initially meet a kind youth or a wise man. Instead, we meet someone who, by gradual stages, by word and act and gesture, reveals his kindness or wisdom to us.

And the writer is similarly helped. By accepting the discipline of a restricted point of view, he refuses those aids that trap even the hardest spirit into laziness. He has only one character's observations and one character's thoughts to help him body forth his scene. Is another character angry, or is he only pretending to be? The observer can only observe the angry man's words and actions of the moment, and can only interpret these in the light of whatever he knows of the angry man's behavior in the past and of his own experience, often misunderstood, of men in general. The writer who limits himself in this way cannot fall back on the omniscient narrator's convenient editorial comment or on instantaneous transitions from one mind to another. Because he cannot, the obvious alternative becomes the right alternative—the rendering of the scene in all its fullness and particularity, with that loving attention to detail that distinguishes the master of the craft of fiction from the propagandist who just happens to select narrative form as the vehicle for his thesis.

There is another obvious advantage to the restricted and sustained point of view. In a story that is organized around a change in one character—a new awareness of the person he really is, a reaction to disappointment or triumph, an adjustment to an evil beyond his most fierce imaginings, the fresh discovery of love or faithlessness—in such a story the restricted point of view acts as a natural selector. For if the observer is also the person who changes, the principle of his attention and the principle of the story's organization approach an ideal unity. That is, the observer in fiction, very much as in life, attends closely enough to only some of his sensations to store them

up in consciousness, or the dark welter of the unconscious. Now, it is precisely these things that he notices strongly enough for them to be worth recording which reflect his unique selective process, and which constitute the basis of that realistic texture of consciousness the restricted point of view aims to weave. But at the same time, such things play a major role in bringing about change. The thing noticed is by definition the thing affecting. It becomes not just event but cause, a force making for change.

In such a story there is one force other than event, or external situation, that can be potent in effecting change: I refer of course to character. And again the restricted point of view helps. For it can reveal both the behavioristic surface of the observer's life and the inner workings of his consciousness. Specifically, the writer can buttress speech and action with conscious motives, idle speculation, apparently casual memories (Stephen Crane's reporter who had forgotten that he had forgotten the soldier of the legion who lay dying in Algiers and who could now for the first time feel sorry for him), the way the observer's own voice sounds in his own ears, the lies and pretensions and evasions, the self-denials and acts of moral probity that never become public property and, above all, the tone and exact phrasing of a unique human consciousness that, like the whorls of the hand, stamps "Inviolable, particular, irreplaceable by another of the same general kind" on even the least of us.

This list exhausts neither the particular advantages that the restricted point of view holds for the story built around a change in some one person nor its generic advantages for all fiction. And it certainly fails to suggest the brilliant use Joyce makes of both sorts of advantage in "The Dead." I say "both sorts"; it is hardly necessary to remind this audience that "The Dead" is built around a change in one character, Gabriel Conroy, and that the story is told in the third person, the bulk of it from his point of view. But the real question is raised by another phrase, "the bulk of it." If Joyce can, in fact, use the sustained point of view so successfully, why does he abandon it from time to time in a story where its consistent use would seem to simplify so many problems and where its actual use is effortless and right.

The first time that we are confronted with a point of view not Gabriel's is apparently insignificant since it is technically not an abandoning but only the characteristic suspending of point of view at the beginning of a story. But a closer look reveals a difference that is crucial. For the point of view does not settle simply and directly from that of the sound camera to that of the chief observer as it does, for example, in the brilliant opening of "Counterparts." Instead we pass through the Misses Morkans' point of view, and through Lily's, before we settle down to Gabriel's.

In part this is merely conventional. For thus letting us see one character through the eyes of one or two others orients us to the character's exterior before we must look through his inner consciousness where he may see himself only rarely, and then with distortions, as in the mirror incident of the present story. And we can appreciate the naturalness of this method if we contrast it with that of Faulkner's "Barn Burning." Within the compass of a single paragraph toward the beginning of that fine and moving story Faulkner takes us out of the boy's mind to let us look at him *with the aid of outsiders*—"small and wiry like his father, in patched and faded jeans even too small for him,"—and then back into his mind. And although what we get on either side of the shift in point of view happens to be good Faulkner, the total effect of the paragraph is a trifle jerky, a trifle obtrusive. Joyce no doubt does better by letting us see Gabriel before he arrives and as his aunts know him, a source of comfort and security in a world whose Freddy Malinses must sometimes come "under the influence"; and he does better by letting us see him after he arrives as Lily sees him—scraping the snow from the bottom of his galoshes.

But Joyce does much more. He gives us the aunts' point of view and Lily's so strongly that bits of their vocabulary, their own turning of a phrase, are occasionally heard.

Here is the Misses Morkans' point of view, with the phrasing presumably Kate's.

That was a good thirty years ago if it was a day . . .  
Many of her [Mary Jane's] pupils belonged to the better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line.

The reference to the "better-class families," coupled with the complete ignoring of the question whether any of the pupils

were musical, is enough to sketch in one element of the family background out of which Gabriel came. This element later combines with Gabriel's memories of his mother (the brilliant economy of this brief recollection is perhaps unmatched in our literature; we must go to Tolstoy's presentation of Vera Rostov to find its equal) and still later with Gabriel's telling of the Patrick Morkan anecdote to body forth the facts and history of a family's defensiveness: the need for better-class families and diamond-bone sirloins, for sons in the learned-and-gentlemanly professions that are safe from the smear of trade, for a name such as "the old gentleman" to refurbish a father who bore that smear; the fear of acquiring a daughter-in-law who was country cute, of anyone's supposing that they had ever lived in Back Lane when only the mill had been there, of anyone's supposing that the grandfather who had been a starch miller was—save the mark—a glue boiler.

Without this family background, we cannot understand Gabriel's mother-induced defensiveness. Without it, we cannot understand the insulation that, like a pair of galoshes or a diving suit, keeps out the snow, that shuts love out and seals it deep within, that makes Gabriel unaware that anyone can have individuality and the unique inner life which individuality implies. Beyond question, we need some hints of this family history at the beginning of the story, for it is only here that the insulation is intact, the indifference to others complete. For with Lily's sharp and surprisingly personal speech—"The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you"—there is a first rip in the insulation and Gabriel is in some deep and fundamental sense born.

Sharing the Misses Morkans' point of view has then in fact a great deal to do with Gabriel and the family who implanted in him attitudes that run so deep they go unrealized—and all the more so because he would never permit himself the justifying phrase "better-class families," which means that Joyce cannot permit it on his lips.

But what do we gain from sharing Lily's point of view? To answer that question let us look at a part of the passage that most clearly echoes her phrasing.

[her three mistresses] were fussy, that was all. But the only thing they would not stand was back answers.

The absolute refusal to stand back answers contributes a great deal more than may be obvious at a casual glance. Lily has been disciplined into the role of the proper maid who is taught to submerge herself beneath a manner that, without being pretentiously formal, would be as impersonal as her uniform if tricks of phrasing and pronunciation did not hint at her essential individuality. The question about the weather, the subdued "sirs" and "Miss Kates" show that she is attempting to fulfill this role—that the lectures about back talk and keeping her place have done their job. More than this, they have done their job for Gabriel. He does not expect back answers or bitterness or any other unpredictable, and therefore individualizing, reaction from the girl. The two questions he asks are tremendously revealing in what they tell us of his indifferences to anything but her surface.

By itself the first question is significant enough. For "do you still go to school" addressed to a girl who has been out of school "this year *and more*" tells us a good deal about a questioner who attended the Misses Morkans' *annual* party the year before (he remembers "what a cold" Gretta contracted then). He had either asked the same question and then forgotten that Lily had said she was out of school—or he had been too indifferent even to inquire. Either alternative demonstrates the same lack of interest.

And this effect is heightened when we place the second question beside the first. For both assign Lily to two mere age groups within an entire social class. The first age group is composed of girls who go to school; the second, of those who, through with schooling, marry "one of these fine days," some "young man." The assignment to the anonymity of a mere category is complete.

And then this young woman, trained to avoid back talk, to keep all talk with her superiors channeled in such safe and impersonal subjects as the weather, becomes a person. The reference to "wedding" and "your young man" touches an experience (or just possibly a group of experiences) so disillusioning that she must utter "with great bitterness" her retort: "the men that is now are only all palaver and what they can get out of you."

The speech, as we have observed, disturbed Gabriel pow-



erfully, slashing his protective insulation (he blushes "*as if he felt he had made a mistake*"). Some part of its power to disturb is the result of its unexpectedness; and its unexpectedness in turn is a result in part of what Gabriel has come to expect of the speaker—someone who has been trained not to give back answers. There are of course far more important reasons for its unexpectedness, reasons that go deep into Gabriel's total history; later portions of the story make these abundantly clear. And the references to her training could easily have been introduced through his eyes—for instance, through a casual memory or association. But a powerful negative reason argues against this. Joyce cannot afford more than a slight awareness on Gabriel's part of Lily's individual existence. The image of her as a child "on the lowest step nursing a rag doll" is all that he can risk. And this he must risk. For Gabriel must know her a long time, and through an image that has some suggestive power, if his failure to imagine that she could have an inner life is to tell us all that it should about his blindness to his fellow beings. For the same reasons that he must fail to explore this image, his mere remembering a second image—say, one of her face after Aunt Kate had rebuked her—would suggest that he possessed a greater power of sympathy, a greater awareness of individuality than it is desirable for him to display so early in the story. For this scene is both a parallel and a preparation for two later scenes. And, in both a limited initial awareness of others is essential.

In the first of these, he is confronted with Miss Ivors. Like Lily, she is someone he has known for a long time; "they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel." But it is only after she has roused all his defensiveness, and with the sting of Lily's bitter retort still just below the forefront of consciousness that he wonders, surely for the first time, "Had she really any life of her own behind all her propagandism?" The phrase "all her propagandism" comes out of that evening's struggle, out of the rebuke that he has accepted from her, out of the questions from her he has failed to answer, out of a defensiveness that is heightened by the fresh cuts she has given to the insulation that until that night had shut out so much of the world. As such, "all her propagandism" seems part of the resentment he harbors for a world not ready to accept him at

the valuation his need cries out for. (Still rankling from the Lily incident he had earlier observed:

The indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry.

And many parallel instances of resentment could be adduced.) But the rest of the sentence—"Had she really any life of her own . . ."—marks an advance in grace. For though the question is defensive and meant to belittle, the particular means of belittling would not have occurred to him before the Lily incident—that is, he is for the first time able to imagine that the lack of an inner life such as Lily has had, can be a rebuke. And it marks an advance in humility as well. For Lily is the means of rebuke to someone whose career and his have been exact parallels "first at the University and then as teachers." Thus he shares with Miss Ivors, as a member of her "very serious and hyper-educated generation," the reproach that the absence of an inner life carries—a reproach made real by someone "whose grade of culture differed from his" and from Miss Ivors' even more than the male dancers' had.

The question that until that night he had failed to ask of Lily and Miss Ivors he had also failed to ask of his own wife: had she a life of her own? His failure to ask it, even silently and of himself, has intensified the Morkan influence on Gretta. For if this influence, this dislike of back answers could until that night produce reticence in the naturally talkative Lily, how much more must it have led Gretta to keep "locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes" — an image that she could expose neither to her insulated husband nor to a mother-in-law who resented her as country cute. Indeed, only once before the evening of the story do Gretta's actions hint at Furey's death and then with the greatest indirection. Gretta, who had been unable to be with Michael Furey in his last days, nursed her mother-in-law "during all her last long illness" as if to atone for her inability to do as much for the boy from the gasworks.

Thus we see how Joyce blends the observations of others with Gabriel's observations. The fusion is striking. And what is perhaps most striking is the completeness of fusion in spite of great indirection. The quality of the indirection may be defined simply. Anything that passes through Gabriel's consciousness clearly stems directly from him; however little it may seem to concern him, it is still *his* thought. Whatever passes through another character's mind concerns him only if it touches on him or on a situation in which he is immediately involved. But neither passage that we have looked at touches Gabriel or any interest of his. The fusion takes place because Joyce has imagined with great insight and fidelity the way of life that produced Gabriel; anything that tells of that way of life tells also of Gabriel. Because it tells of Gabriel, it amplifies and confirms the other insights that the story provides and contributes to that part of the preparation-for-each-internal-event which springs from character.

One other departure from Gabriel's point of view deserves particular attention. I am thinking of those moments when Joyce becomes the omniscient narrator. I should like to generalize about two of these. Both come at crucial moments late in the story. Both summarize, or report, rather than render the scene at hand; that is, both give the final diagnosis rather than the symptoms out of which that diagnosis is induced. More specifically, both are, viewed out of context, the devices of a lazy writer introduced at those moments in a story at which he has least excuse for laziness. But let us look at the passages and their context. The first:

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments *unresentfully* on her tangled hair and half-opened mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath.

The second:

*Generous* tears filled Gabriel's eyes.

I have italicized the words which must be omniscient, for we want to look closely at their special quality and purpose. Their special quality can be defined most clearly when we realize that if they ever became part of Gabriel's thought, they would be absolute lies. They come at a moment in the story when Gabriel must be completely humble; if he should recognize generosity in

himself at this moment, the mere fact of such self-concern would make him ungenerous. And if earlier he had noticed that he was unresentful, he would have lost humility for the same reasons that he would have lost it in the self-recognition of generosity. More than this: we are conscious that we do not resent something only when we are aware that we have something to resent, that our dignity, for example, has been trampled, our pride invaded. Thus a conscious lack of resentment, even more than a conscious generosity, becomes a contradiction in terms. The negative reasons for omniscience summarize readily enough: Gabriel's point of view won't work. The degree of authority, of reliability, that can attach to his passing thoughts about his own humility, is quite simply insufficient. And we can dramatize these reasons by a ready contrast. When the air of the room chills Gabriel's shoulders, he stretches "himself *cautiously* along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife." He may, and indeed must, be conscious of the deliberate love that he exercises in order to avoid waking or in any way disturbing his wife. It dramatizes his new sympathy for others, even for someone whom the Gabriel of the beginning of the evening would have regarded as a false wife.

These reasons we have called negative because they tell us why we must abandon Gabriel's point of view if we are to convey the meanings embodied in "unresentfully" and "generous." What are the positive reasons for shifting to the omniscient narrator's point of view rather than to some other character's? The question is of course an innocent one; no other character can be privy to Gabriel's thoughts. But it is not wholly innocent, for a positive reason in fact exists. At this point in the story we require absolute authority, the voice of the Father, by whom all things internal to the story were made. In part this authority can be given by outward and visible signs—by what Gabriel happens to think about, by the consideration for his wife captured in the word "*cautiously*," by the sharp reversal established because he twice remembers in the story's final passage Mary Jane's words and not his own (Gabriel constantly has quoted himself earlier; even when he remembered receiving Gretta's first letter, he recalled only words he had written to her). But beyond this it can rest in the author's absolute reliability; the contingency, the possibility of error—

whether of pride or erring reason—makes everyone else's consciousness suspect. The writer can say: I am the creator; it is this way because I mean it to be. And more than most writers, Joyce has earned the right to this device. He regularly renders his meaning through speech, action, and the realistic bodying forth of conscious thought without support from the crutch of omniscience. Thus when he turns to this device, he does it as it were out of strength rather than weakness. Beyond this, the rarity with which he employs the technique has its own effect. The reader's attention has not been dulled by constant exposure (who notices an italicized word on a page composed entirely in italic type?). If he is reading well, he notices the omniscience and notices that it is meant to carry the full weight of the creator's authority as nothing else is. All possibility of ambiguity is removed: the look *is* unresentful; the tears *are* generous.

Without this, the possibilities of an undesirable ambiguity would be real. Throughout the story Gabriel has been ready to resent anything and everything. As soon as Lily upsets him, the mere sound of the men's dancing feet becomes "indelicate" and reminds him how their grade of culture differs from his own. As soon as Miss Ivors upsets him, he thinks of her as that "girl or woman or whatever she was." When he hopes to use his eulogy of the aunts to exact his small revenge upon Miss Ivors, his resentment spreads to them and they become in his mind "only two ignorant old women." With this habit of resentment so deeply fixed and with a much more obvious occasion for resentment—the knowledge that another man has held the place in Gretta's heart that belonged to him—the reader feels that he can accept without sense of insult the clear and unambiguous signpost "unresentfully."

The need for the signpost that "generous tears" provides is even more clearly indicated. Throughout the evening Gabriel's lack of generosity, of *caritas*, has paralleled his need to resent. Moreover, Joyce had introduced earlier in the final hotel-room scene a moment where the reader's attention was directed with unusual force toward Gabriel's lack of generosity.

The earlier situation develops in this way. Gabriel is striving to find the wholly appropriate moment for initiating the advances that his passion, freshly awakened toward his wife by the events of that evening, dictates. While he waits for a

sign from her, he begins to talk about Freddy Malins. He says that Malins is "a decent sort of chap, after all" and says it, significantly, "in a false voice"—significantly since Joyce insists on the full authority of omniscience here again. And Gabriel then mentions a pound he had "lent" Malins.

A few moments later, Gretta—apparently responding to Gabriel's patronizing praise of Malins and to the loan, though actually much more moved by the flood of warmth and tenderness evoked by her memory of Michael Furey—says, "You are a very generous person, Gabriel."

This speech of Gretta's is natural and sincere; but applied to the Gabriel who is facing her at that moment, it is patently untrue. Joyce leaves us in no doubt on this score. For between Gabriel's speech about Malins and Gretta's comment, he has introduced some of Gabriel's least generous sentiments: Gabriel longs to curse aloud "the sottish Malins and his pound"; when Gretta approaches him to kiss him and tell him he is generous, he is "in such a fever of rage and desire" that he does not hear her coming toward him.

Joyce has gone to great trouble to deny the fact of generosity to Gabriel at one moment in the story. By doing this he has been enabled to dramatize more fully the tremendous triumph that Gabriel's final achievement of generosity represents. But he cannot afford to leave us in doubt about this realization; he must say "generous" with all the authority he can muster.

I find it difficult to imagine many readers who will condemn as unsubtle Joyce's occasional use of omniscience. But if such readers exist, I would like to suggest two possible ways of answering their objections. The first is obvious: subtlety pretty clearly falls short of being the highest virtue fiction can offer. Truth and perspicuity, among others, rank higher.

The second answer might begin by admitting that, everything else being equal, subtlety is in fact a virtue. But it would continue by observing that Joyce's use of the explicit and omniscient mode here establishes a clear and unambiguous framework within which the nicest subtleties can be relevant and appropriate. As a result, the general reader senses in many of the small details at the end of the story a rightness that he feels no need to phrase or explain but that adds immeasurably to his pleasure in the story. The critic, who may sometimes feel a pro-

fessional obligation to phrase and explain, can of course analyze such subtleties. He can, however, feel no assurance that he is right, that he is not displaying his own ingenuity at the expense of the story, unless the explicit shape of the story supports his analysis. And it is such phrases as "unresentfully" and "generous tears" that give explicit shape.

Here is one subtlety of this sort, drawn from among many at the end of "The Dead." We have said that at the moment when Gabriel is most involved with his own passions, with his "fever of rage and desire," with his own ungenerous being, he does not hear Gretta approach, though she ends up standing next to him. That is, Gabriel's attention is so turned in on himself that he fails to hear something any ordinary man would hear. Later, after "generous tears" have filled his eyes, he is so sensitive to another's presence that he hears something no ordinary man would hear.

The incident comes about in this way. Through a series of devices, Joyce has gradually associated Michael Furey with the light from the street lamp. (The intention of the present paper does not permit us to mention more than one of these devices: the "ghastly light" from the lamp. The sound of the word "ghastly" is enough to establish its connection with the boy from the gas works, even if gas were not an obvious source of light; its etymology is enough to establish the connection with a boy who is dead and therefore ghostlike—ghastly and ghostlike, we remember, come from the same Old English word—even if the dead were not ghastly to look upon.) With his sympathy for Furey actively aroused, his awareness intense and generous, and with somewhere in the background of his consciousness a sense of Furey's being outside of the window as if involved in the light of the lamp, Gabriel hears "a few light taps" on the window and turns to look. It is ordinary snow, ordinarily soundless to the ordinary human ear. But Gabriel is so acutely conscious of the young boy who, one night in the rain, threw gravel at Gretta's window that his hearing becomes preternaturally sensitive. He hears not because of any alteration in the eardrum that earlier could not hear the footfall of the woman he thought he loved walking in the same room. He hears because he is for the first time in his life truly unresentful, truly gen-



erous toward others, truly attuned to "all the living and the dead."

"Old Red," like "The Dead," offers many reasons why we should examine the handling of point of view. Seen against the entirety of Miss Gordon's work, it reminds us that though she chose to tell both this story and *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* from Mister Maury's point of view, she chose the third person for the short story we are considering, the first person for that fine novel. This difference may be more important than we at first realize. A first-person point of view makes any shift obtrusive, awkward. But a writer who is skillful enough can slip easily and unobtrusively from a third-person point of view that is identified with the consciousness of one character into one that could not be distinguished from that of a freely moving (*i.e.*, dissociated from the eyes and ears of any one character) sound camera and then into the consciousness of some other character. And this is precisely what Miss Gordon does in "Old Red."

As in "The Dead" we may ask the question why are these shifts made, and ask it for similar reasons. But the question of *how* they are made is for our present purposes prior and possibly as rewarding.

"Old Red" begins and ends with Aleck Maury's point of view. It is natural enough that it should; it is his story. A sportsman, a former hunter and still an active fisherman, he pays one of his rare visits to his mother-in-law's home to eat hot batter bread and Merry Point ham, to see a daughter he has not seen in some time, and to meet his son-in-law. By the end of the story we learn that this rare exposure is a calculated risk; it gives a settled way of life a sporting chance to capture him and take away his freedom. As such, it parallels the calculated risks Old Red the fox took when he exposed himself on the wide field, framed on one side by "the dark blue line of undergrowth that marked the Rivanna River, on the other" by "the blue of Peter's mountain." And in a final identification with Old Red, he discovers that all the while he has been the hunter he has in truth been the hunted as well—lured by the world's wiles, pursued by the world's ways, sometimes driven by a wife's iron will, sometimes approaching the only mildly dangerous trap baited with a mother-in-law's home-cured hams.



Such a summary leaves out a great deal, but it provides a sufficient background for an examination of the way point of view is employed. The story's opening is masterly:

When the door had closed behind his daughter, Mister Maury went to the window and stood a few moments looking out. The roses that had grown in a riot all along that side of the fence had died or been cleared away, but the sun lay across the garden in the same level lances of light that he remembered.

We watch from inside the room, because the door closes "behind his daughter"; we watch with Mister Maury's eyes because it is *his* daughter. We go to the window with him and when he stands "looking out" we see what he sees. But now we see not only with his eyes. We see with his memories as well and thus see more than we ever could with the aid of the mere sound camera, though less than we could through omniscience. He notices that the roses that had once grown along the fence are gone — the sound camera could not know that they had ever been there — but he doesn't know why they are gone — though omniscience could tell us why.

Thus the passage performs the task of easing the reader into Mister Maury's point of view with precision and economy. We get the authority of the interpreter who can know so much and no more. We sense the length of absence from the old house; yet from the memories that attach to the "riot" of roses and the "level lances of light" we feel that this is a place he has known not momentarily or casually but over some period of time and through a strong emotional involvement.

During most of Section I Mister Maury's point of view is sustained with the same edge and economy. Through the neatly gathered traps it introduces the theme of readiness for flight and the *implied pursuit*. And it always gives everything its local habitation and its name. Mister Maury does not simply remember that his own father was fond of quoting verse. He remembers him "at the head of the table spouting his own poetry—or Shakespeare's—while the children watched the preserve dish to see if it was going around." Here even the curious word "spouting" is right, for it picks up the boyish resentment at the delayed preserve dish. And the delay is not merely an extremely effective device for fixing the quoting habit in the

boy's memory in terms of a more urgent consideration; it reminds us that this boy, appropriately enough, grows up to love hot batter bread, to become heavy in middle age, and to be struck with wonder and perturbation at his son-in-law's devotion to poetry.

Then, in a story where every event would seem calculated to bring Mister Maury to a realization of his identity with Old Red and where anything that did not impinge on his consciousness must at first glance seem arbitrary, we very gradually *abandon* his point of view. The change takes place as Mister Maury and the two young people group themselves around the fire after dinner. At the beginning of the scene we are still in Mister Maury's consciousness: he lets his mind veer "from the old house to his own wanderings in brighter places," and we see as he sees: "He regarded *his* daughter and son-in-law affably."

Then we begin to hear and see things as he just might hear them and see them, but with no emphasis on this fact; indeed there is nothing in the few paragraphs that follow which insists that the sound camera be identified with his ears and eyes or that its way of seeing be touched with his habit of mind. Then, while he, his daughter, and his son-in-law are examining Jim Barbee's lure, the Devil Bug, we read the following passage:

Sarah leaned forward to look, and Steve, still standing on the hearthrug, bent above them. The three heads ringed the light.

With that last sentence we are clearly out of Mister Maury's point of view; the camera looks down from above, impartially, on the three heads. But so gradually has the transition taken place that we are scarcely aware that there has been a shift. Here we are a long way from the amateur writer who brings us up with a jerk whenever point of view is altered—or from the bored and indolent professional who, like the Fitzgerald of *Tender Is The Night*, can insist on thrusting forward his own personality with such a phrase as "to shift point of view."

But the transition in "Old Red" does not stop here. The sound camera continues to hold sway for almost a page without clearly penetrating anyone's consciousness—holds sway, in other words, long enough for the reader to grow accustomed to see-

ing without help from Mister Maury's eyes or Mister Maury's memory. Then we read the following paragraph:

The fire burned lower. A fiery coal rolled from the grate and fell onto the hearthrug. Sarah scooped it up with a shovel and threw it among the ashes. In the circle of the lamplight the two men still bent over the table looking at the flies. Steve was absorbed in them but he spoke seldom. It was her father's voice that rising and falling filled the room. He talked a great deal, but he had a beautiful speaking voice. He was telling Steve now about Little West Fork, the first stream ever he put a fly in. "My first love," he kept calling it. It sounded rather pretty, she thought, in his mellow voice. "My first love . . ."

The method of transition employed here deserves our best attention. We first watch the fire as the camera might watch it. Then the "fiery coal" falls not on brick or tile, where it would be harmless, but on the hearthrug. As readers, our protective and housekeeping instincts are aroused. We want to see something done about the coal before it burns the rug. And something is done about it. Sarah does that something; and so we look with Sarah as she looks down to scoop up the coal, look into the fire with her as she throws it in "among the ashes," and look up with her to see "the two men *still* bent over the table." The word *still* takes us particularly close to her consciousness. When she stopped paying attention to the two men to remove the minor fire hazard, they were bent over the table; when she had finished removing it and taken time to look up, they were *still* bent over the same table.

Then with the phrase *her father's voice* we are completely immersed in her point of view and are beginning to listen to its rise and fall as she hears it. "It sounded rather pretty, she thought, in his mellow voice."

The transition from one character's point of view to another's is spread over two pages, with such patience and craftsmanship that the reader is completely unaware of any shock or jerk. And there is no padding, no marking time. The story loses none of its movement and inner urgency; there is no loss of immediacy or local excitement.

But such admiration of the *how* provides us with no answer to the *why*. Why, in a story devoted to a fresh realization, or discovery, on the part of one character, do we need to creep into

the mind of another for even one sneaking minute? To answer such a question is to see the human meaning that alone can justify a scrupulous attention to technique.

Why, for the human power of the story, do we need to hear Mister Maury's voice as anyone else hears it? And why, in particular, do we need to hear it as Sarah hears it—"beautiful," "rather pretty," "mellow?" And why does the writer need to prove that it is truly heard by echoing his phrasing not only in quoted passages but in indirect discourse also: *the first stream ever he put a fly in?* (The position of "ever" and the suppression of the auxiliary verb represent no accident; Miss Gordon produces the same construction in the same character's consciousness in *Aleck Maury, Sportsman*. The idiom is characteristic of a Southerner of his generation and upbringing.)

One clue to the answer exists here, as it did for Joyce, in the limited authority that attaches to any man's view of himself. Just as any comment of Gabriel's on *his own* generosity would be suspect, so, too, is the evident approval with which Aleck Maury views his own life. After all, he has hunted and fished where other men have sold bonds or written essays on Skelton. After all, he has avoided these two aging women and their home, though he perceives the elder's need clearly: "And she went on, even at her advanced age, making her batter bread, smoking her hams, according to that old recipe she was so proud of; but who came here now to this old house to eat or to praise?" For aware as he is of her need, the image of her brought to ground, or trapped and caged within the old confines of habit, still stands as a warning to him that he must remain always footloose, always packed and ready for flight.

Worse than this, however, he has apparently been away from his daughter for some time. Since he is her sole surviving parent, his responsibility is particularly heavy here — at least as the world judges. Yet he has not bothered so much as to meet his prospective son-in-law, to be present at the wedding, or to learn his name. When he comes to the house some time after the marriage, he must in fact force himself to memorize the son-in-law's name. In view of all this, the handy excuse he gives — "As if he hadn't always known exactly the kind of young man Sarah would marry"—rings hollowly on an ear that judges as the world judges.

The point is: the story does not judge as the world judges—even though it cannot accept Mister Maury's testimony to his own innocence at its face value. It judges through Sarah's eyes for that one moment. And it is right and inevitable that it should. With his wife dead, any primary responsibility for failure on his part must be to that daughter if it is to any living person. Of all living persons she is the one with the greatest *apparent* cause for resentment. If in the face of this, she can still, even while aware that "he talked a great deal," lose herself in admiration for his speaking voice, this is a long step toward confirming his own satisfaction in his life. And when that mellow voice is applying the phrase, "my first love," not to herself or her mother but to a trout stream and in such a way that all other loves become trout streams, then we get the same effect that Joyce gives through an entirely different shifting of point of view: she too is unresentful.

And just as Joyce gives us various concrete details to support his central insight, so, too, does Miss Gordon. The primary ones can be found in the handling of the character of Sarah herself. Throughout, the girl maintains just the right attitude of good-humored, if somewhat amazed, tolerance toward her father's fishing anecdotes—and maintains it in such a way that while we never sense resentment, we do experience a realism that makes foolish illusion or adulation on Sarah's part out of the question.

But her realism and wit combine to do more than express a qualified approval for a way of life that has been, however incomplete, harmonious and integral enough to find its expression and symbol in a voice constantly mellow. Taken along with her comments on her husband's writing habits and her consideration for a servant whom the other characters at dinner seem to expect to wait around all night to clear the table, they tell us something about Sarah as a moral being. They tell us that in fact she had little to resent in her father's absences: she has turned out well.

If we stop to ponder the matter, we may notice an apparent difference in these shifts of point of view in Joyce and Miss Gordon. Joyce turns to omniscience at the story's reversal—that is, at a moment which is central to the story's structure as well as to its meaning. Miss Gordon's shift seems

at first glance significant for meaning only; it apparently does nothing to bring about the identification with the fox, the discovery that ends the story.

It is easy to see why a first glance failed to do the job. How could one brief moment perceived entirely through Sarah's consciousness help create an illusion that comes to Mister Maury while he threshes about in his search for sleep an evening or so later? After all, he is too absorbed at that earlier moment in fishing lures and reminiscence to notice how closely and powerfully she attends to his words.

But the words she hears are after all the words he uses—"Little West Fork . . . my first love." As such they are, obviously enough, the product of his mind. And these precise words help prepare us for the more difficult portion of the story's resolution.

I speak of the more difficult portion: an identification with Old Red the fox cannot by itself end the story successfully. Carefully prepared for and beautifully written though it is, it would by itself still leave much of what has gone before unused and unresolved. For this is first of all a story of fishing, not of hunting. Fishing here is action; hunting is reminiscence. And though the two are powerfully associated—in Mister Maury's thought and in our ordinary habits of mind—the reader of this story has experienced primarily the impact of the angler's world. Consequently, this world also must be active in the story's end, the discovery that the pursuer is in fact the pursued.

But the rendering of this poses a problem. To create an identification between man and fish—a difficult and potentially ridiculous task under any conditions, is impossible here. Placed beside the identification with the fox, it would become a repetitive and mechanical literary device. Worse, it would become psychologically absurd; nothing less than Mister Maury's whole life is needed to make him perceive his essential identity with Old Red. Must he live a second life to become one with Old Speck the trout?

Miss Gordon, of course, attempts nothing so outlandish. A few of Mister Maury's phrases no doubt narrow slightly the gap between men and fish—"Aunt Sally Crenfrew is no more kin to me than a catfish"; Steve's face lost in thought is "that of a person submerged," who will "float up to the surface and

then sink again"—but the gap remains wide. Miss Gordon has chosen a different means to make the world of fishing carry the imagery of pursuer and pursued—the imagery of streams. The key passage immediately precedes the final identification with the fox:

He relaxed again upon his pillows, deliberately summoned pictures up before his mind's eye. Landscapes—and streams. He observed their outlines, watched one flow into another. The Black River into West Fork, that in turn into Spring Creek and Spring Creek into the Withlicoochee. Then they were all flowing together, merging into one broad plain. He watched it take form slowly: the wide field in front of Hawkwood, the Rivanna River on one side, on the other Peters' Mountain. They would be waiting there till the fox showed himself on that little rise by the river.

Here the merging streams become more—though not insistently more—than mere landscape. Flowing onto the field where pursuit always begins, they become themselves pursuers. But for this to be a meaningful reversal, we must have earlier seen them as pursued. And it is in this connection that Mister Maury's words "Little West Fork . . . my first love" make their structural contribution. In them we see how a stream can obsess consciousness; more than this, we hear the pre-emptive word "love" uttered here not in the privacy of interior monologue but for the ears of a man he had met only that day. A place for fishing is admitted, publicly and unashamedly, as an object worthy of his love—to be pursued as ardently as any other loved object.

The streams thus merging in pursuit may remind us of a great moment in European literature. There too one who has loved to excess ends by being pursued by the winds of lust and, symbolically, by the tributaries that pursue, and merge with, the Po as it passes her place of birth. I refer to Francesca and *The Divine Comedy* with some reason. Many of us whose native tongue is English had this passage first made memorable for us by Miss Gordon's husband, Mr. Allen Tate: his article "Tension in Poetry" appeared some five years after "Old Red" and did its part in fixing Dante's *seguaci* firmly in the memory of a generation.

The literary relationship here, though one between hus-

band and wife, does not seem to be what I earlier called a matter of conventional, or demonstrable, influence. But the *familial* relationship has a symbolic rightness. It stands as the outward and visible sign for those thousands of honest writers, large and small, who in their love and scrupulous pursuit of their craft found themselves in the end its inextricably wedded members—like the author of the *Iliad* and the author of "The Dead."

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



## **Caroline Gordon's Golden Ball**

DANFORTH ROSS

Caroline Gordon, like many other contemporary novelists and poets, has from time to time entered the classroom. She has taught at Columbia University, at the University of Washington, at North Carolina State College for Women, and at St. Catherine's Seminary in Minneapolis. She has also participated in numerous writing conferences. My own work with her was at Columbia during the 1946-47 session, and it has continued, informally, down to the present.

At the moment she is not teaching and, while this may be to her gain as a writer, it is hardly to the gain of student writers. For Caroline Gordon teaches writing with the same painstaking seriousness and dedication that she pours into her novels and short stories. Not only this, but she has the rare quality of getting across to students the things that she herself has learned and made a part of her own writing. Hers is not an unconscious knowledge of writing and therefore virtually impossible to communicate but a knowledge that she has dug for and reflected upon. She leaves a clearly etched imprint on all except those who speed past her at ninety miles an hour.

Caroline Gordon is the product of a distinguished body of teachers. Those she drew upon most often in the classroom at Columbia were Aristotle, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Henry James, Stephen Crane, James Joyce, Ford Madox

Ford, Percy Lubbock, and her husband Allen Tate. Narrowly speaking, some of these men are not teachers, but they all leave the door open for the student to come in. Ford Madox Ford, I would gather from some things she has said to me, led her into the temple. She speaks of sitting at Ford's feet during a European sojourn in the early thirties, and has called him her master. Even prior to this apprenticeship with Ford and to her marriage with Allen Tate she had tried her hand at a novel. But this novel, though the mere fact that she wrote it shows the depth of her desire to write, suffered from her lack of training and experience.

One other teacher, perhaps the one who inspired the desire to write, should be mentioned. This was Caroline Gordon's father, the late Maurice Gordon, a classical scholar and himself for many years a teacher in Southern schools. Once, when discussing Aristotle's *Poetics* (this was in the class at Columbia), she stopped for a moment and said she would be forever grateful to her father for two things. He had taught her to love mythology and he had taught her to value discipline in style. The first, she thought, had deepened her; the second had saved her from the temptation of just letting herself go. Maurice Gordon did a third thing for her: he furnished her with the material for probably the most complex and completely developed character in her novels and short stories, Aleck Maury.

Caroline Gordon's approach to teaching is from the center out, as against from the periphery in. She constructs (perhaps generates would be a better word) a core and then winds string around it. Perhaps the finished ball (not necessarily perfectly round) isn't terrifically large, perhaps it spreads enormously. The size to me isn't important. The important thing is that Caroline Gordon has something in the center that can't be pricked and that you can wind string around endlessly. The ball at least has a capacity for size and it has solidity.

She expects the student to help with the winding—but not at first, or very cautiously. Once he is out of the classroom, on his own feet, he will have to do all the winding. But she wants to make sure that he has something solid at the core, something worth winding on. She is rather dogmatic in the classroom—in generating the core. She is easy and informal in manner and there is no sense of the desk (she often sits on it) as a barrier

between her and the student. But she is very sure of her direction and the minute a student starts eating grass over at the side of the road she just about jerks his neck off. "I'm not going to waste my breath discussing that until you show some glimmer of getting this," she once said to a student who showed reluctance to go down the road with her. Another time she took her whip to a balky student. "I think the fault is with you," she said. "You're just not trained to read it." And one day she dug her spurs into the whole class. "Flaubert and Crane are not dated," she asserted, "but some of the manuscript in this class is definitely dated."

Most students, I think, react against the dogmatism—some moderately, some completely and dogmatically. Many teachers today make a fetish of tolerance. They will consider all views, no matter how uninformed. At times they even ask students to set up standards of academic excellence. Students feel comfortable with such teachers and they think, this is the *one* way. They will tolerate anything in a teacher except dogmatism. Dogmatism, of course, has very obvious dangers; and yet it may be a justifiable reaction against a looseness that has crept into our civilization. Ortega y Gasset questions the right of people who "have never given five minutes' thought" to a subject to oppose their opinion against that of a master of the subject. Such people have no "right," he declares, "to an opinion on the matter without previous effort to work one out for themselves." Caroline Gordon teaches the American student this unpalatable and unromantic lesson. At least she tries to. One would be foolish to pretend, of course, that the shock treatment ever meets with universal success. It is always a desperate measure.

She started off the class at Columbia by telling us that the writing of fiction could be divided into two parts, a part that could not be taught and a part that could be. "There is a mystery to the writing of fiction," she said. "There is an irreducible something that you can't put your finger on." She would leave it to us to discover the mystery if we could. She spoke boldly, as if scornful of a scientific age that had systematically sought to eliminate mystery from the world, to make man the measure of all things, to refuse to admit the existence of anything that was not tangible.

The teachable part of writing, Caroline Gordon went on,

was less important than the unteachable; nevertheless, it was not entirely without interest. The first thing the young fiction writer must strive to do, she said, is to get his story down cold. The trouble with most young writers was that they only got about half of their story on paper; the other half they kept carefully in their heads. To get the story down cold, the writer must render it, detail by detail, not simply report it. A detail reported is one that presents only its surface dimension. A detail rendered presents or suggests a dimension that expands beyond the surface. The writer himself cannot tell how far it expands.

But how get to this mysterious dimension beyond the surface? How *render* the detail? The answer: first of all, get the detail physically, get its physical essence. Caroline Gordon is a painter by avocation and she sees a scene somewhat as a painter would see it. She even thinks in the language of the painter. For example, in an analysis of "A Simple Heart," she explains Flaubert's method by relating it to painting.\* For Flaubert "the five senses are the palette from which he contrives his illusion of life. He rarely attempted to render a phenomenon by portraying only one of its aspects." Basically, it seems to me, Miss Gordon sees Flaubert as following the method of impressionism. Flaubert made the great discovery, she declares, "that in fiction no object exists until it has been acted upon by another object." The impressionist painter certainly looks for the dynamic relations between objects.

In getting the scene down in this dynamically physical way, the writer doesn't merely report it, he renders it. Thus Stephen Crane renders the death of the tall soldier in *The Red Badge of Courage*. At the climactic moment the tall figure "began to swing forward, slow and straight, in the manner of a falling tree. A swift muscular contortion made the left shoulder strike the ground first. The body seemed to bounce a little way from the earth." "Crane gives you the scene cold," Miss Gordon explained to us in class. "Nothing is left in his head. When the soldier falls, you see the whole thing. The left shoulder hits the ground first, but it does more than that. It bounces a little."

Caroline Gordon doesn't stress plot. She suspects that students who want to be taught how to plot are simply looking for

\*This analysis is found in *The House of Fiction*, a work on the writing of fiction by Miss Gordon and Allen Tate. I have drawn only upon those parts of the book prepared by Miss Gordon.

a shortcut and will wind up writing a prefabricated fiction. Nevertheless, she does make some extremely acute comments that pertain to plot. "When you're starting a novel or story," she told us, "you must drive a stake down. You must drive it down firmly at the beginning. Otherwise your story won't be unfolding all the time." In *The Ambassadors*, for example, Lambert Strether arrives in Europe on a mission to solve the problem of his fiancée's wayward son. James presents this problem right away. He drives down the stake. Then he creates the waves that rush against and swirl around the stake. "Everything has to swirl around the stake. You must never let the stake get away from you. As the characters come in, they must do the things that make the reader realize about the stake. Feed in the characters. Develop them a little at a time. Drive down that stake. Reveal your problem."

If she has made an original contribution to the teaching of writing, Caroline Gordon feels that it is in the realm of point of view, which she considers to be the hardest problem for the writer to master. What she does is to push the traditional analysis of point of view deeper than other authorities have pushed it. She also stresses two techniques called "the long view" and "the short view." Miss Gordon points out that the author either gives the reader the story from a distance (summarizes or telescopes his scenes) or he presents a close-up view (gives the scene more or less the way it would occur on the stage or in a flash back through a person's consciousness). The first method establishes the long view, the second the short view.

Miss Gordon notes that the omniscient narrator, who offers the broadest vantage point for telling the story, is prone to use the long view. The omniscient narrator is the author presenting the story himself, without availing himself of the point of view of one or more of his characters. He tends to present his story from a distance, though at times he may come up close for sharply rendered objective scenes. A second point of view is that of the first person narrator (the *I*). Here also the author may avail himself of either the long or short view, but his tendency is toward the short view. This approach gains immediacy and intensity and subjective depth but restricts the story world developed to the bounds of the narrator's own experience or to experience that he has only at second hand.

A third point of view develops when the author identifies himself with a character other than a first person narrator. In doing this, the author must master the interior monologue (be able to render, not simply explain, what goes on inside a man's head). In its extreme form, as developed by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, the interior monologue becomes a stream-of-consciousness. The disadvantage of this third approach to point of view is that it is essentially a short view approach. However, the author may at his discretion, though this must be done very carefully, slip out of the character with whom he is identifying himself and present the story himself, either through a long or a short view.

We move here into a fourth approach to point of view, one which, as Miss Gordon says in the appendix to *The House of Fiction*, "combines the advantages of the three others and involves the artist in fewer of their disadvantages than any other technique." Her analysis of this fourth point of view, which she calls "the Technique of the Central Intelligence," follows from the thinking of Henry James. James "insisted," she explains, "that all the action of a novel should be evaluated by a single superior mind placed in the center of the main dramatic action." (As for example, John Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle" or Gabriel Conroy in "The Dead"). But the author, though he avails himself of "the immediacy" of the Central Intelligence's "eyewitness account," is not restricted to it. He "may range over the whole cast of characters and give you their views upon the action," and he may also make his own "surmises, summaries, and explanations in terms of what the central character sees and feels," thus dramatizing what are "usually inert masses of material." The one big disadvantage of the Technique of the Central Intelligence is that it is limited to stories or novels in which the central character is at least fairly complex. The character must be capable of probing his experience with intelligence, of dominating it to some extent. Such a character is Lambert Strether, the hero of *The Ambassadors*. Emma Bovary, on the other hand, lacks these attributes, and Flaubert avoids the strategic blunder of trying to force her into the role of a Central Intelligence.

Caroline Gordon's analysis of the Central Intelligence is undoubtedly her most original contribution to the theory of

writing. However, as an engine in her teaching, it seems to me to follow organically from her insistence upon the rendering of physical life. It is more string wound tightly around her ball. "Everything in fiction has to be incarnate—the word become flesh," she once said to us at Columbia. We begin with what the chief character experiences physically and whenever we want to see, hear, touch, taste, or smell we come back to him. We slip inside of him and we slip away. Then through our control of the Central Intelligence, we subtly shift the focus so that the reader sees more than the character and gets a moral insight that he doesn't get.

Again, if the physical detail is to become symbolic, it must first of all have reality at the physical level. Caroline Gordon reminds us again and again that the writer cannot afford to indulge in what James calls "weak specification." "You can't say that men ate rats at Vicksburg and make the reader see it. You have to show a specific man eating a specific rat. And it should be good eating too." Eventually in "A Simple Heart" Felicite's parrot becomes a symbol of the Holy Ghost, but we accept this symbolism only because Flaubert has made us "see the parrot as he appeared" to Felicite, and made us see it again and again. And Flaubert has also specified in incident after incident Felicite's "lifelong self-denial and innocence," so that it becomes credible for her to have such a vision.

In her own story, "Old Red," Caroline Gordon makes the same successful use of symbolism. Mr. Maury, who has sought all his life to elude the restrictions of society, the better to express his own individuality, keeps returning in his reveries to the fox-hunting experiences of his youth. Slowly the reader becomes aware that Mr. Maury is unconsciously identifying himself with one fox, "Old Red," who for years had eluded the hunters. Mr. Maury in his partly successful struggle with society, perhaps his finally successful struggle, becomes "Old Red." However, the reader accepts this identification only because Mr. Maury is first made real, and then, through Mr. Maury's experience of him, the fox. Thus the reader gets an insight that carries him beyond Mr. Maury's insight, but only after he has first seen everything that Mr. Maury sees.

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# Bibliography of Caroline Gordon

JOAN GRISCOM

This bibliography includes works by Miss Gordon and writings about her. The latter are surprising and disappointing; the majority of the reviews are either negligible or inadequate as criticism, and, considering the extent and excellence of her work, the fact that there have been only four general articles devoted to it is something more than surprising. I have listed the reviews, etc., separately under the novels and the *House of Fiction*, and those that seem especially valuable and perceptive I have marked with an asterisk.

The following abbreviations have been used. *Bkman*: *Bookman*; *Bks*: *Books*; *HopR*: *Hopkins Review*; *HH*: *Hound and Horn*; *HudR*: *Hudson Review*; *NRep*: *New Republic*; *NYHTBR*: *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*; *NYTBR*: *New York Times Book Review*; *NYkr*: *New Yorker*; *SRL*: *Saturday Review of Literature*; *SR*: *Sewanee Review*; and *SoR*: *Southern Review*.

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## Two Letters from Dame Anna Earwicker

JAMES JOYCE

Notes by FRED H. HIGGINSON

The originals of the letters printed below occur in a large red-backed notebook used by James Joyce late in 1923 for the composition of early drafts of most of Part I of *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>1</sup> The letter seems originally to have been intended to follow what is now *FW*, 102.17, although it does not appear in *FW* until Part IV, beginning at 615.12, much altered and rearranged from the earlier texts and quite possibly reconstructed or rewritten by Joyce from memory when he came to need it.<sup>2</sup> The notebook (British Museum Add. MS 47471B) contains three texts of the letter: 1) a first draft (ff. 31-33, with revisions on facing pages), 2) a second draft (ff. 36-42), and 3) a partial third draft (opposite ff. 14-23). The two texts reproduced here are the first draft and a version made by combining the first two pages of the second draft and the remainder of the third, a hybrid text which has the sanction of pagination in Joyce's hand. With the exception of marks of punctuation, which I have once or twice inserted, I have reproduced in the transcription Joyce's exact text, as far as I can decipher his difficult script and penetrate the obliterations of pencil and crayon with which his early drafts are covered. There are two kinds of text in brackets: crossouts and questionable readings. The latter are indicated by question marks within the brackets. Notes follow the second text.

## THE FIRST DRAFT

### Revered

Majesty Well I've heard all those birds what they're [saying] bringing up about him and welcome for they will come to no good. The Honourable Mr Earwicker, my devout husband, is a true gentleman which is what none of the sneakers ever was or will be because in the words of a royal poet such are born and not made and that he was and it was between Williamstown and the Ailesbury road on the longcar I first saw the lovelight in his eye. Where he told me to pardon him his true opinion but that I had got a lovely face that day. I thought I was [on (the) top of his world] back in paradise. Well, revered Majesty, I hereafter swear he never once sent out the swags with a drop in [mug] them but [the] milk as it came from the cow like he did and all that is [invented] all pure made up by a snake in the grass and his name is McGrath Bros against that dear man, my honorary husband. If I were only to tell your revered all [he] that caffler said to me was it this time last year as I told Mrs [Jim] Tom for his accomodation McGrath Bros. I'm saying and his bacon not fit to look at never mind butter which is forbidden by the eight commandment thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour's wife. But I could read him. Aha, McGrath, the lies is out on him like freckles. When I think of what he had the face to say about my dearly respected husband can I ever forget that. Never. So may God forgive McGrath Bros all his trespasses against the Hon. Mr Earwicker. For two straws. If I was only to tell someone I know they would make a corpse of him with the greatest of pleasure and not leave enough for the peelers to pick up.

There never was any girl in my house expecting trouble out of my husband, never, and those two hussies, neither of them was virtuous. After [the doctor's] [public] declaration out of the Lock and whereas I shall bring within your notice, majesty, the said honourable Mr Earwicker has [a very hairy chest] a chest very hairy from a child for it to be able to be



seen which I am the privileged one to see and whereas he is pursuant to that very affectionate for salesladies' society. I will not have a reptile the like of the McGrath Bros who thinks he is the big noise here to be spreading his dirty lies all around where we live as I simply agree to it. I won't dream of a sausage of his, not even for catsmeat and. The obnoxious liar, he was fired out of Clune's where he was [a ?] only a common floorwalker for giving his guff.

I've heard it stated about the military but did space permit it is my belief I could show that it was the wish of his mind to cure the King's evil and I hereinafter swear by your revered majesty that he gave me the price of new bulletproof dress with angel sleeves said in my presence: Just as there is a God of all things my mind is a complete blank.

Well, revered Majesty, I tender your heartest thanks and regrets for lettering you and I shall now close, hoping you are in the best. I don't care that for him and his about an experience of mine of a girl with a clerical friend. Ask him what about his wife and Mr John Brophy and Son, the kissing solicitor, which is engaging the attention of private detectives. I only wish he would look in through his letterbox some day. He would not say that was a solicitor's business. What ho, she bumps! He would be surprised to see her and Mr Brophy quite affectionate together kissing and looking into a mirror.

So much for the [lies] sneakery that I was treated not very grand by the thicks off Bully's Acre. If any of Sully's thicks [was?] to pull a gun on me [worse for him] he will know better manners. I will complain on them to policesergeant Laracy at the corner of Buttermilk Lane and he will have his head well and lawfully broken by a Norwegian who has been expelled from Christianity.

I am perfectly proud of Mr Earwicker, my once handsome husband who is as gentle as a woman and he never chained me to a chair since this island was born. I can show anyone the bag of cakes given to me by Mr Earwicker for our last wedding day. Thank you, beloved, for your beautiful

parcel. You are always the gentleman. I tell sneakers and Mister Sausage McGrath [creeping Christ] back and streaky, ninepence.

Hoping the clouds will soon dissipate you will enjoy perusal most completely.

Signed

P.S. This will put the tin hat on McGrath.

Note. Opposite the first page of the MS of this letter is written the following: "and he always [spoke to] sat forenenst me most attractable when he was making conversation about business and pleasure after [he had] his third mug or fourth." These phrases are incorporated with other matter at a much later place in the succeeding versions of the text.

## A SECOND VERSION OF THE LETTER

Revered

Majesty well I've heard all these muckbirds<sup>3</sup> what they're bringing up about him and they will come to no good. The Honourable Mr Earwicker my devout husband and he is a true gentleman which is what none of the sneakers ever will be because as sings the royal poet their likes must be born [which] like he was, my devout, and it was between Williams-town<sup>4</sup> and the Ailesbury road I first saw the lovelight in his eyes on top of the longcar<sup>5</sup> I think he is looking at me yet as if he'd<sup>6</sup> pass away in the clouds when he told me his true opinion to pardon him, golden one, but that I had got a lovely face and I felt I was back again in paradise lost when all the world was June.

Well, revered majesty, I hereafter swear never once he sent out the swags<sup>7</sup> with a drop in them but milk as it came from the cow and that is all a pure makeup by a snake in the grass and his name is McGrath Bros<sup>8</sup> against that dear man, my honorary husband. If I was to tell your revered all that caffler<sup>9</sup> said to me was it this time last year as I told Mrs Tom<sup>10</sup> for his accomodation McGrath Bros I'm saying and his bacon not fit to look at never mind butter which is forbidden by the 10 commandments thou shalt not bear false witness

against thy neighbour's wife. Aha, McGrath, the lies is out on him like freckles. But I could read him when I think what he had the shame to suggest about my dearly respected husband can I ever forget that? Never. So may the Lord forgive McGrath Brothers for all his trespasses against the Honorary Mr Earwicker. For two straws yes and less I could tell someone I know and they would make a corpse of him by private shooting with the greatest of pleasure and not leave enough of McGrath Bros for the peelers<sup>11</sup> to pick up.

Lies. There never was any girl in my house expecting trouble off my esteemed husband, never. Those pair of whores that committed all the nuisances neither of them were virtuous pursuant to said declaration of the public doctor out of the Lock<sup>12</sup> whereas I shall bring under revered notice the above Honourable Earwicker to possess second to none from a child a chest very hairy and eyebrows for it to be able to be seen which I am the privileged to behold and pursuant to same very affectionate after salesladies' company. I will not have a dirty reptile and the like of McGraths to be spreading his lies all around where we live if he thinks he is the big noise here as I simply agree to all. There, you worm! I know you now. I would hate to say what I think about him. I exgust sneak McGrath wanting to live on me and my noble husband like a dirty pair of parachutes. I wouldn't dream of a sausage belonging to him for meat for the cat and it was in all the Sunday papers about Earwicker's farfamed fatspitters<sup>13</sup> that they were eaten and appreciated by over fifteen thousands of persons in Dublin this weekend. The obnoxious liar. He was one time a Scotchman and fired out of Cloon's where he was only a common floorwalker for giving guff.

Moreover I have heard it stated about the military<sup>14</sup> but did space permit it is my belief I could show it was always the wish of his mind to mitigate the King's evil<sup>15</sup> and I hereinafter swear by your revered majesty that it was him gave me the price of my new bulletproof dress with the angel sleeves and he said to my presence in these words: Just as there is a God of all things my mind is a complete blank.

Well, revered, I tender your heartbroken thanks with regrets for lettering you and will now close hoping you are in the best. I don't care a fig for him and erronymous letter about an experience on the part of me as girl alleged unpleasant with a clerical friend. How about it? I was young and easy then to feast his eyes on with my sweet auburn hair hanging to my knees and I can do just as I please with it because now it's my own by married woman's impropriety act. Never mind poor Father Michael<sup>16</sup> now but [answer my question] chat me instead. If McGrath Brothers [was like] could handle him he would jump out of his dirty skin. When next you see M.G. ask him what about his wife, Lily Kinsella who became the wife of Mr Sneak,<sup>17</sup> with the kissing solicitor, at present engaging attention by private detectives being hidden under the grand piano to find out whether nothing beyond kissing went on. Lily is a lady, liliburlero bullenala,<sup>18</sup> and she had medicine brought her in a licensed victualler's<sup>19</sup> bottle. Shame! Thrice shame! I only wish he would look in through his letterbox one day and he would not say that that was a solicitor's business. What ho, she bumps!<sup>20</sup> My, he would be surprised to see his old girl with Mr Brophy, solicitor, quite affectionate together, kissing and looking into a mirror.

So much for sneakery that I was treated not very grand by the thicks<sup>21</sup> off Bully's Acre. If any of Sully's thicks was to pull a gun on me he'll know better manners the way I'll sully him. I will herewith lodge my complaint on him to police sergeant Laracy<sup>22</sup> who does be on the corner of Buttermilk lane<sup>23</sup> and he will taken such steps to have his head well and lawfully broken by a Norwegian who has been expelled [from] out of Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

Dear Majesty I hope you are now well. How are you? To speak truth I was rather put out latterly about the thugs got up for McGrath by Sully. I am advised he [waxy one]<sup>25</sup> is at the present in hospital with palpitations from all he drunk and it's seldom I saw him any other way. That he may never come out but he is a rattling fine bootmaker by profession. [But] Whereas I will let all know that I am perfectly proud of this great civilian, [P.W.] AP Earwicker,<sup>26</sup> long life

to him, my once handsome husband, who is as gentle as a mushroom to be seen from my improved looks and a greatly attractable when he always sits forenenst<sup>27</sup> me, poor ass,<sup>28</sup> to make our polite conversations over lawful business and pleasure when he is after his [fourth] 3rd mug of 4 ale and shag<sup>29</sup> and he never chained me to a chair or followed me about with a fork on an Easter Monday<sup>30</sup> ever since this native island was born and that is why all the police and everybody is all bowing to me when I go out in all directions. Earwicker's 100% human.<sup>31</sup> I tell slysneakers and you, Master McGrath, pale bellies our mild cure, back and streaky, ninepence.<sup>32</sup> I can hereby show whoever likes original bag of one apiece cakes and Adam Findlater's<sup>33</sup> best figrolls which was given to me on occasion of our last golden wedding day by dear Mr Earwicker. Thank you, beloved, for your beautiful parcel. Always the born gentleman can be plainly seen by all from such behaviour.

Well I like their damn cheek for them to go and say around about he as bothered as he possible could. I must beg to contradict in the strongest as indeed I may say in the matter of hearing that he is after his manner and certified to be very agreeable deaf.<sup>34</sup> I'd give him his answer if he was to dare to say my revered husband was never a true widower<sup>35</sup> in the eyes of the law on consideration of his [late] diseased inasmuch as the present Mr Earwicker esquire has often given said deponent full particulars answering [of?] the late diseased in dear delightful twilit<sup>36</sup> hours when<sup>37</sup> this truly timehonoured man is a great warrant to play slapsum and population peg<sup>38</sup> and Sally Shortclothes when he can easily hold his own whilst we frankly enjoyed [thank heaven for it] more than anything the secret workings of nature I humbly pray and was really delighted of the nice time. Who would argue with a particularly mean stinker like McGrath Bros. If I am credibly informed cannonballs is the only true argument with a low sneak. Ping! Ping! Hit him again! Ping! That ought to make him hop<sup>39</sup> it. Ha! Ha! I must laugh. Sneaker McGrath has stuffed his last black pudding.<sup>40</sup> 3 p. m. Wednesday. Grand

funeral of McGrath Brothers. Don't forget. His funeral will now shortly take place. Remains must be removed by 3 sharp.

R.I.P.

Well, revered majesty, I take this liberty of cherishing expectation that the clouds will soon dissipate and will now conclude above epistle with best thanks for your great kindest and all the trouble to took<sup>41</sup> self and dearest of husbands, Papa Earwicker, who I'll be true to you {unto?} life's end as long as he has a barrel full of Bass<sup>42</sup> with love of Maj and all at home in the earnest hope you will enjoy perusal of same most completely.

So help me witness to this day to my hand and marks from you revered majesty [?] most duteous I am

Your affectionate

Dame Anna Plurabelle Earwicker<sup>43</sup>  
(only lawful wife of Mr Earwicker)

P.S. This puts the tin hat on MG.

## NOTES

The relation of the letter to the meaning of *FW* as a whole has never been totally explained, but critics agree that it is scratched from a dungheap by a hen called Biddy Doran (her surname means "exile" and she is thus connected with Joyce himself), that it comes from Boston and is addressed to one of the Maggies, and that it contains Anna Livia's defense of the unspecified Sin her husband, H. C. Earwicker, has committed in the Park. The origin of the letter in Boston has been explained by Mrs. Adaline Glasheen as part of an extended use of the material Joyce found in Morton Prince's classic *The Dissociation of a Personality*. The Maggies (in the letter, "those pair of whores") are two girls involved in the Sin and are possibly related more than phonetically to the "Majesty" of the salutation. Mr. M. J. C. Hodgart asserts (v. n. 2, below) that this letter "is addressed to the King, like the one Joyce wrote about the publisher's objections to *Dubliners*," but Add. MS 47471B, f. 42, following the second draft, has material about an irate alderman to whom the letter has

been addressed. There is at least the possibility that Anna has made the mistake of taking a magistrate for a majesty, and I am inclined to think that this word, thus misused, is another of Anna's charming vulgarities. Her "honorary" for "honorable," her "parachute" for "parasite," her use of adjectives where she should be using adverbs combine the epistolary style of Winifred Jenkins with the etymological ineptitudes of Molly Bloom. The word "erronymous," with its delightful combination of "anonymous" and "erroneous," is perhaps the high point of the device. We can also look on the word as the beginning of the later style, for it is very much like words in the book Joyce eventually produced. Indeed, what is perhaps most interesting in the early texts of *FW* is the lack of those gauze curtains of the late versions; and the force of Joyce's commitment to the later style has denied us, until now, a masterpiece of its kind, for Anna's letter is that.

- 1) (New York, 1939); hereinafter *FW*; citations are by page and line number. Reproduction of MSS by permission of the Estate of James Joyce.
- 2) A fair copy of the letter (longer and of slightly later date than the texts here) has been published by M. J. C. Hodgart in "The Earliest Sections of *Finnegans Wake*," *James Joyce Review*, I (Feb. 2, 1957), 11-15. Hodgart states that the letter was originally intended to follow *FW*, 112.02 (this is what he *means*; there is a misprint in the citation). But in the first draft the letter follows almost immediately on *FW*, 109.33; and in the second draft it follows *FW*, 102.17, and is followed by *FW*, 104.04. But since there is a summary of the contents of the letter at *FW*, 111.10 ff., it may be that Joyce thought of the letter as belonging somewhere in that neighborhood. Perhaps it would be best to leave the question open.
- 3) Hodgart transcribes "muchbirds"; but the "k" is plain. I find something like 40 misprints in the Hodgart publication, of which I have commented only on the most important.

- 4) Williamstown: a suburb of Dublin.
- 5) longcar: a four-wheeled vehicle with seats back to back facing outwards.
- 6) Hodgart: *he's*.
- 7) swags: a large draught of liquor.
- 8) McGrath Bros: McGrath means "son of grace"; since Anna means "grace," it is tempting to assume that the McGrath Bros. are the Earwickers' twin sons, Shem and Shaun. But in *FW* other figures intrude: Master Magrath, an Ir. greyhound (fl. 1869); Cornelius Magrath, an Ir. giant befriended by Bishop Berkeley; and Meiler Magrath (1523?-1622), the famous pluralist, who served nine years as a papal bishop and an Anglican archbishop at the same time. It is perhaps significant that the pluralist married a woman named Anne. (For all proper names in *FW*, the indispensable work is Adaline Glasheen's *A Census of "Finnegans Wake"* [Evanston, 1956].)
- 9) caffler: liar.
- 10) Mrs Tom: The "Mrs [Jim] Tom" of the first draft suggests at least an autobiographical slip, if not a reference.
- 11) peelers: bobbies.
- 12) the Lock: a hospital for the treatment of venereal disease.
- 13) fatspitters: sausages. According to some authorities, the name "Earwicker" derives from OE *efer* 'boar' and *wacer* 'watchful.' The constant reference in the letter to pork products may mean that Earwicker's dreamwork on the etymology of his name leads him to fear butchers, hence the McGraths.
- 14) the military: the Three Soldiers involved in Earwicker's Sin; a slang term for porter, the drink (v. n. 26, below).
- 15) King's evil: scrofula.
- 16) Father Michael: Miler Magrath, a Catholic priest martyred at Clonmel in 1650, is known as Father Michael of the Rosary (on the identical name, cf. n. 8, above).
- 17) Mr Sneak: pronounced as in stage-Irish, "Mr. Snake"; in *FW*, Magrath is the Snake (in the Grass).



- 18) liliburlero: this well-known refrain is associated with Lily throughout *FW*.
- 19) licensed victualler: a pub-keeper; Earwicker is one.
- 20) What ho, she bumps: a catch phrase from a song popular c. 1895; cf. *FW*, 205.06.
- 21) thicks: thugs. Sully: Magrath's servant, who is connected with the Earwickers in having committed adultery with their manservant's wife (*FW*, 573.30). His usual title in *FW* is "Sully the Thug," which is equivalent to "Sully the Van[dal]," or Sullivan, which is one of the appellations of the twelve customers at the Earwicker pub. Various historical Sullivans are listed in the *Glasheen Census*. Any historical basis for this character probably comes from the careers of the brothers A. M. and T. D. Sullivan, who published the *Irish Nation*. T. D. Sullivan was the first of the members of the Home Rule delegation to America to repudiate Parnell after the famous divorce decree, and *The Nation* published anti-Parnell editorials.
- 22) Laracy: a policeman of this name appears in *Ulysses*.
- 23) Buttermilk Lane: in *FW*, associated with the ballad "Kitty of Coleraine" (cf. *FW*, 210.33).
- 24) Norwegian: one of the longest set-pieces in *FW* (311.05 ff.) is a story about a Norwegian captain and a tailor. In the story the captain is identified with HCE; he is also an invader with an Irish bride. The "Norwegian . . . expelled out of Christianity" seems to me to have overtones of Ibsen, who left Christiania in 1864 on being refused a poet's pension; Ibsen was, of course, the greatest early influence on Joyce.
- 25) [waxy]: a cobbler or bootmaker.
- 26) Earwicker: the second draft has "[Mr] H. C. Earwicker"; the "AP" of the third draft is probably just a mistake. But the "[P. W.]" is more interesting, since, like "Mrs [Jim]," it suggests personal overtones; one famous "P. W." is P. W. Joyce (no relation), the belletristic Irish nationalist. Some authorities (but cf. n. 13, above) say that "Earwicker" is derived from "earwig," which in

turn is AS *earwicga*, from *eare* 'ear' and *wicga* 'insect,' the latter part of the name being connected with roots meaning "carry." Earwicker's real-life name is Porter (*FW*, 560.22-31), which may also derive from words meaning "carry."

- 27) forenenst: against.
- 28) poor ass: the same identification of Earwicker and ass appears to be made at *FW*, 405.06.
- 29) four ale and shag: ale at 4d. a quart and tobacco.
- 30) Easter Monday: the important one is April 24, 1916, when there was a rising in Dublin.
- 31) 100% human: second draft has "[white]" also.
- 32) pale bellies . . . ninepence: description of a grade of bacon. Hodgart's "pale billie" is questionable.
- 33) Adam Findlater: a 19th C. Dublin grocer.
- 34) Hodgart: *deep*.
- 35) widower: a puzzling word. Does Anna refer to HCE's conduct as a sea-captain? Or is HCE a widower? Or does Anna intend another word entirely?
- 36) twilit: second draft seems to read "firelit."
- 37) Hodgart: *where*.
- 38) population peg: ingeniously explained in the Glasheen *Census* as Margaret Sanger (used at *FW*, 436.10).
- 39) Hodgart: *stop*.
- 40) black pudding: a sausage; second draft has "[white]" also.
- 41) Hodgart: *look*; the fair copy inserts a necessary "for" between "took" and "self."
- 42) Bass: a Dublin beer or ale.
- 43) signature: the second draft has "Dame Bessy Plurabelle Earwicker." The "Anna" of the third draft appears to be in ink and to be later than the rest of the text. "Livia," which appears for the first time in the fair copy, would therefore have been the last of the three famous names to have been decided upon.

## E. M. Forster: The Early Novels

HAROLD J. OLIVER

Elizabeth Bowen has written that "there has never been any question of Mr. Forster's development; there never seems to have been any early work."<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this essay to suggest that on the contrary Forster's development is very significant indeed and that his first three novels—*Where Angels Fear to Tread* (published in 1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907) and *A Room with a View* (published in 1908 but begun in 1903)—are interesting partly because they are less convincing statements of the theme which is treated more subtly in *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924) and partly because they have many of the virtues of those later novels alongside faults which Forster was to learn to avoid.

All three early novels have as their central interest a conflict between two kinds of human beings—roughly, those who, with Forster, believe in personal relationships and those who do not.<sup>2</sup> Each kind is associated with a particular place; the place becomes the symbol of the group or kind; and symbols from one novel are found again in another.

In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the conflict is between Italy, represented, as it were, by the Italian Gino, and Sawston, represented by Mrs. Herriton and her daughter Harriet. Sawston is Forster's name for an attitude, that of the "practical" man who has no time to worry over the personal relationships that mean so much to others. It is the attitude which readers of the later *Howards End* know as Wilcoxism but it might also be called the creed of the "public" school—the English public school which sends its products forth into life "with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts."<sup>3</sup> The name "Sawston" itself, however, is apparently derived from the Surrey town of Surbiton (now virtually an outer suburb of London), for it is the inhabitants of Surbiton and particularly the members of the Surbiton Literary Society

who are so incapable of understanding the life of the imagination, in Forster's famous short-story "The Celestial Omnibus";<sup>4</sup> and so Sawstonism is suburbanism too. The conflict between Sawston and Italy, in this first novel, develops into a struggle over the baby son of Gino and Lilia Herriton, Mrs. Herriton's daughter-in-law; after Lilia's death, Harriet steals the baby, and he is killed.

In *The Longest Journey* (which seems to be the most autobiographical of the novels—Forster has admitted that the hero, Rickie, represents his creator more than does any other character, and Rickie even writes Forster's short-story about the girl who turns into a tree<sup>5</sup>) the conflict is between Sawston, on the one hand, and Cambridge and Wiltshire on the other. Cambridge may be called Forster's second favourite symbol—the symbol for the way of life that is the opposite of Sawstonism and "the very antithesis of the rotarian spirit." The phrase is taken from his fullest account of the Cambridge spirit, in his biography *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (London, 1934, p. 66) where he writes of his own discovery there, "too good to be real," "that the public school is not infinite and eternal, that there is something more compelling in life than team-work and more vital than cricket, that firmness, self-complacency and fatuity do not between them compose the whole armour of man" (p. 26). In the novel, Cambridge is represented by Rickie's friend Ansell ("It was contrary to his own spirit to coach people: he held the human soul to be a very delicate thing, which can receive eternal damage from a little patronage" p. 246<sup>6</sup>), Wiltshire by Stephen, Rickie's half-brother, the man of nature whose feelings are not trammelled by acquired notions of decorum. (In an early version of the novel he was called Siegfried!) Identified with Sawston are the Pembroke—Agnes, whom Rickie eventually marries, and also her brother, Herbert, of whom this revealing analysis is made:

He was capable of affection: he was usually courteous and tolerant. Then what was amiss? Why, in spite of all these qualities, should Rickie feel that there was something wrong with him—nay, that he was wrong as a whole, and that if the Spirit of Humanity should ever hold a judgment he would assuredly be classed among the goats? . . . He (Rickie) saw that for all his fine talk about a spiritual life,

he (Herbert) had but one test for things—success: success for the body in this life or for the soul in the life to come. And for this reason Humanity, and perhaps such other tribunals as there may be, would assuredly reject him. (p. 188)

There, perhaps, is the most direct definition of Sawstonism in all Forster's work.

In *A Room with a View*, the conflict is between Italy and England, or more particularly, London. With Italy are associated the Emersons, father and son. In the father a critic<sup>7</sup> has seen strong suggestions of Samuel Butler, with whose ideas Forster was, of course, in sympathy, although he has recently denied any great influence, adding "I think I have a more poetical mind than Butler's."<sup>8</sup> Certainly Emerson Senior is the mouthpiece for many Butlerian and Forsterian concepts. Equally un-English (in this special sense) is his son George whom the heroine, Lucy, first meets in Italy. Of the other, English, party are Lucy's chaperone and cousin, Charlotte, and also Lucy's fiance, Cecil Vyse—he, particularly, being thought of as closely connected with London.

The second element the three novels have in common is their centring on a question of choice. In each of them there is a character (or group of characters) who has to decide which party to join—Italy or Sawston, Cambridge and Wiltshire or Sawston, Italy or London. And the plot is concerned primarily with the making of the decision.

In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, these focal characters are Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott. Philip is sent by his mother, with his sister Harriet, to recover Lilia and Gino's baby after Lilia's death; Caroline Abbott, Lilia's friend, blames herself for Lilia's marriage to Gino and goes back to see justice done. She learns to see something even more important than justice—truth—and then puts the problem to Philip in a new light:

Do you want the child to stop with his father, who loves him and will bring him up badly, or do you want him to come to Sawston, where no one loves him, but where he will be brought up well? (p. 167)

So armed, and having learnt that Gino, for all his lack of civilized "polish," has an attractiveness and worth of his own, Philip too sees with clearer eyes as he watches Harriet seeking to quieten Gino's baby whom she has stolen:

"Hush!" answered Harriet, and handled the bundle laboriously, like some bony prophetess—Judith, or Deborah, or Jael. He had last seen the baby sprawling on the knees of Miss Abbott, shining and naked, with twenty miles of view behind him, and his father kneeling by his feet. (p. 178)

The lesson Philip has to learn is that "life was greater than he had supposed, but it was even less complete" (p. 197). Caroline, who has already learnt it, confesses that even though she is going back to a future of "Sawston and work" she has fallen in love with Gino herself.

The central character of *The Longest Journey* is the lame scholar, Rickie. Rickie is seen first as an undergraduate in Cambridge—a Cambridge in which an Agnes Pembroke seems a mere intrusion. But, after the death of her fiance Gerald, Rickie marries her and promptly sinks into Sawstonism—so much so, that learning that he has a half-brother, Stephen, he does not even tell Stephen of the relationship. Thereafter, as the novelist tells us in his own words, "he deteriorates . . . He remained conscientious and decent, but the spiritual part of him proceeded towards ruin" (p. 218). Actually the remainder of the novel traces his rise again. Rickie, having learnt that Stephen is the son of his (Rickie's) mother, not of his father, as he had supposed, rejoins Stephen and leaves Agnes. Finally he saves Stephen's life by pulling him out of the way of a train when he lies drunk across a railway line; but Rickie, lame, cannot move quickly enough to save himself. Nor has he won a complete victory of the spirit; for even now he has not learnt to accept Stephen for what he is.

*A Room with a View* shows a choice finally and happily made. This time it is made by the heroine, Lucy Honeychurch, whose life has a downward and then upward movement similar to Rickie's. At first, she rejects George Emerson, leaves Florence for Rome, and accepts the hand of Cecil Vyse; but finally she rejects Cecil, rejects spinsterhood (equally dangerous apparently!—but Mr. Emerson convinces her that "passion is sanity")

and accepts George. *A Room with a View* is, as Rose Macaulay says, "the only story, long or short, by Mr. Forster which ends with lovers in one another's arms, anticipating a fine and deathless future."<sup>9</sup> But even here, it should be pointed out, they are not enjoying the usual advantages of such a situation: they are seriously discussing Charlotte—which side was she on?

It will be clear from this brief outline of theme and plots that the three novels are all, in a way, unrealistic—or, to be more exact, all go beyond mere realism: in each there is a kind of symbolism. This symbolism is not of the type which, in the famous phrase, will bite you; and it can be neglected, for the meaning of the main action is plain enough without it. But the action is generally, as it were, on two planes, an incident will normally have two significances; X will not mean Y rather than X (which is the normal kind of symbolism as in, for instance, the poetry of Yeats) but will mean Y as well as X.

This is seen in its simplest form in the use of places. Forster's Italy is Italy—beautifully described, too; but his Italy is also something more, an influence, a way of life. The use of the seasons is another simple example; it is not accidental that the first visit to Italy in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is made in spring, whereas the second, which leads to the death of the baby but also to Philip's and Caroline's self-recognition, is in summer.

So it is with action. The death of Gino's baby is brought about by a collision of two carriages, Philip's and Harriet's; and there is no doubt a strong suggestion that forces like these do often work against one another, unconsciously—with perhaps the further suggestion that, just as the baby may be no worse off after the collision than he was immediately before it, it is better that those forces should work in this way. Another obvious instance is in the closing words of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Caroline has made her great confession to Philip, of her love for Gino; Philip, whose awareness has been made greater than it ever promised to be before, sees her transfigured, "a goddess to the end." But he does not tell her so; and as he contents himself with a prosaic "Thank you, thank you for

everything," the train in which they are travelling passes out of Italy:

She looked at him with great friendliness, for he had made her life endurable. At that moment the train entered the San Gothard tunnel. They hurried back to the carriage to close the windows lest the smuts should get into Harriet's eyes.

An example of a slightly different kind, different in that it adopts a symbol widely accepted, is found towards the end of *The Longest Journey*. Stephen and Rickie, as close to each other as they will ever be, are walking home together; and Stephen, wading in a stream, sets fire to a piece of crumpled paper, to show Rickie a "trick" with it, learnt from Mr. Failing:

The paper caught fire from the match, and spread into a rose of flames. "Now gently with me," said Stephen, and they laid it flower-like on the stream. Gravel and tremulous weeds leapt into sight, and then the flower sailed into deep water, and up leapt the two arches of a bridge. "It'll strike!" they cried; "no it won't; it's chosen the left," and one arch became a fairy tunnel, dropping diamonds. Then it vanished for Rickie; but Stephen, who knelt in the water, declared that it was still afloat, far through the arch, burning as if it would burn for ever. (p. 302)

The rose of paper is obviously the rose of love; and to love, for Rickie, there are limits. But to Stephen, in the water, close to "nature," there are none. And of course it is significant that it is from Mr. Failing, the writer and student of art and nature, that Stephen learnt the trick. And it is probably significant also that the lighted paper first shows up only gravel and weeds but then a bridge—and so on. If the secondary meanings of the passage are not seen, the passage is not therefore worthless; but the symbolism adds a second and perhaps a third layer to the meaning and thereby gives the whole work an added richness.

The very title of *A Room with a View* is symbolical; and it may be worth noting that the symbol is repeated from the early short-story, "The Story of a Panic." There, the boy Eustace, once Pan has visited him, cannot endure his bedroom "with the limited . . . outlook." "It is too small . . . Besides I can't see anything—no flowers, no leaves, no sky: only a



stone wall." So in the novel the Emersons give up to Lucy their room with a view, whereas she associates Cecil Vyse, she tells him, with a drawing room, with no view.

There is, in this third novel, a symbolical use of place as in the first two; and similarly incidents carry more than their obvious meaning. It is noticeable that the whole story turns on three kisses—which are more than kisses. Lucy's first wrong choice is symbolised by her recoil from George Emerson's first impetuous kiss, her second wrong choice by her acceptance—the word is deliberate—of Cecil's next one. This kiss, described in Forster's finest comic style, might almost be said to be the core of the novel.

"Lucy, I want to ask something of you that I have never asked before."

At the serious note in his voice she stepped frankly and kindly towards him.

"What, Cecil?"

"Hitherto never—not even that day on the lawn when you agreed to marry me—"

He became self-conscious and kept glancing round to see if they were observed. His courage had gone.

"Yes?"

"Up to now I have never kissed you."

She was as scarlet as if he had put the thing most indelicately.

"No—more you have," she stammered.

"Then I ask you—may I now?"

"Of course you may, Cecil. You might before. I can't run at you, you know."

At that supreme moment he was conscious of nothing but absurdities. Her reply was inadequate. She gave such a business-like lift to her veil. As he approached her he found time to wish that he could recoil. As he touched her, his gold pince-nez became dislodged and was flattened between them. (p. 132)

From George's next kiss Lucy's recoil is only momentary; and it need hardly be added that for their honeymoon they return to Italy.

Perhaps in some ways *A Room with a View* is less subtle than the other two novels. But on the whole the remarkable similarity of the three of them extends even to their literary merits and weaknesses.

In all three the characterization is the first notable achievement; and of all three one could possibly make the same criticisms. The first criticism—and it relates to a fault not without precedent among writers who divide humanity into kinds—is that Forster is in these early novels much more successful with his comic treatment of the false than with his presentation of the true. He is, allowing for the difference of ideals, in exactly the same position as was Oscar Wilde in a comedy like *Lady Windermere's Fan* or *A Woman of No Importance*; the Lady Hunstantons and Lord Augustus Lortons, even the Lord Illingworths and Lord Darlington, are most amusing, but one cannot even momentarily believe in, let alone entirely support, the Hesters, Mrs. Arbuthnots and Lady Windermeres. So in his comic scenes Forster deserves Lord David Cecil's tribute that "he brilliantly continues that delicate comedy tradition that descends through the English domestic novel from Jane Austen onwards";<sup>10</sup> the delicious solemn conversation between Lucy and Charlotte over George's first kiss, one may suggest, is almost equal to Jane Austen at her best, recorded as it is with such delicate irony that perhaps the only danger is that some readers will miss it and think the novelist takes his characters as seriously as they take themselves.<sup>11</sup>

But is George Emerson himself convincing? I doubt it; he is seldom clear as an individual and quite lacks as presented the charm which is attributed to him by implication. His father, too, as F. R. Leavis has put it, "though not a disaster does lead one to question the substantiality of the wisdom that he seems intended to represent."<sup>12</sup> The one exception to this criticism of Forster's treatment of what may be called the positive side of his theory is Gino, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Gino reminds one somewhat, in both character and function, of Hawthorne's "faun" Donatello (although Gino is never tempted even momentarily to join the party of the civilized); and he is convincing because Forster is aware of his vulgarity and his other faults and presents him impartially. In fact, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* has, in this way, more delicate shading than have the other two early novels; it may also have, as Virginia Woolf suggested, greater unity and harmony.<sup>13</sup>

The lack of unity and the failure to characterise what I shall continue to call, for want of a better word, the true, are both clearly seen in *The Longest Journey*, in Gerald and Stephen. With both characters Forster tries to avoid "flatness" ("flat" characters he thinks are permissible in a novel but not when they are tragic); but here the attempt is too obvious and the result is rather that each character splits in two. Gerald is particularly interesting in that he, as it were, changes sides. When he is on the "wrong" side, he is credible, though only barely so; and Forster's wit is seen at its most amusing in the first picture of him:

Behind her there stood a young man who had the figure of a Greek athlete and the face of an English one. He was fair and clean-shaven, and his colourless hair was cut rather short . . . Just where he began to be beautiful the clothes started . . . (p. 43)

But Gerald is not credible at all when he later seems to stand for the true and is, as it were, recreated in Stephen, who reminds both Agnes and Rickie of him. The reader cannot forget, although the author almost forgets, that Gerald did, after all, have the face (and the mind) of that English athlete.

Stephen, also, is given faults and is credible in so far as they are concerned—in, for example, his drunkenness and general unreliability. But what Forster apparently sees as his sincere and impulsive charm does not "come through"; and one simply does not believe, for example, that he, on the spur of the moment, goes off to the sea on an expedition to bathe just because his aunt tells him to. Rose Macaulay, speaking of Stephen's "enormous charm" (p. 60), finds him "perhaps the most likable creature in Mr. Forster's gallery" (p. 59). When Peter Burra agreed,<sup>14</sup> one is sorry not to be able to do so too. But the truth would seem to be that Stephen is no more convincing than the very virile male usually is in fiction (even in the pages of D. H. Lawrence). Forster was pleased that Burra should, in his essay, have stressed the "belief in athletic beauty" and repeats (in his "Author's Notes" appended to the essay) that he does in fact hold it. But the question for the critic is of the embodiment of the belief in fiction; and what a comparison with Lawrence suggests is not only the possible

"rightness" of the notion but also the difficulty of its translation into the novel form. Here I am in agreement with D. S. Savage, who finds Stephen *inadequate* as "the touchstone of reality and of salvation which Forster proposes" and speaks of "the somewhat ridiculous inadequacy of the antithesis which provides the frame of reference for the novel."<sup>15</sup>

The reason for such inadequacy is perhaps not easy to analyse; but it comes at least partly, I think, from a simple fault. It is always the novelist's duty, even when he adopts the omniscient attitude, to *show* his characters in action, not merely to make assertions about them. And one of the faults in these early novels is that Forster does rely on assertion (the danger of his method of editorial intrusion) and sometimes, I think, assumes as proved the very point which he is trying to make. He takes sides, too obviously, with such characters as Stephen. Of him he says, for instance, that "he had not the suburban reticence" (p. 241). To say this, of course, is to beg the question. One may feel that with more reticence Stephen would be not suburban but more likeable. The reader cannot be blamed if, when the evidence is inadequate, he withholds his assent; and there is some danger that, suspecting prejudice, he will join the opposition.

This tendency to take sides is perhaps also the principal limitation on Forster's comic power. He does not always resist the temptation—a well-nigh fatal one in a serious and subtle comic artist—to "guy" his own creations. Looking back at the otherwise perfect description of Cecil Vyse's first kiss, we do wonder whether it was necessary for his gold pince-nez to become "dislodged and flattened between them." Nor was it necessary, at the end of Chapter XI, to make Cecil snore. Nor do we believe that Lucy, even at her lowest ebb under the influence of Vyse and London, would have ended a letter to a cousin, even Cousin Charlotte (p. 148):

Please do not put "Private" outside your envelope again.  
No one opens my letters.

Yours affectionately,

L. Honeychurch.

Consistency has been sacrificed for the sake of the point and the laugh.

Another criticism of Forster's characterization that has often been made is of his inability to treat the love for each other of a man and a woman. So Lord David Cecil complains that "Sex in his stories is a curiously bloodless and un compelling affair. The only emotional relation between human beings into which he enters fully is friendship." (p. 182) A reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* (27 July 1951) certainly scored a point when he quoted from *The Longest Journey*—the scene where Rickie sees Gerald kiss Agnes—"Her face had no expression. It stared at the intruder and never saw him. Then her lover kissed it" (p. 49) and commented on the give-away "it." But Cecil and others want to go further and claim that Forster is not good with women characters at all. Cecil writes "Since women are more instinctive than men [sic], they are a less fit subject for Mr. Forster. His heroines are not masculine, but they are strangely sexless" (p. 198). The truth is rather, as Rex Warner has put it, that his women are brilliant "on all occasions except when they are in love."<sup>16</sup> It should also be noted that for the most part Forster deliberately chooses the comparatively sexless women to write about; and of such a character—of Caroline Abbott and still more of Adela Quested in *A Passage to India*—the criticism loses its point. One might even go further and say that of the sexless type, and of the older women, he shows an exceptional understanding.

None of these criticisms of Forster's characterization is unimportant but all of them deal with the exceptions. For the most part his comic characterization is unequalled in modern fiction. His people do live, in their own right, apart from the story in which they are, one might say, compelled to take part—compelled by Forster's theory of the novel. (An unfavourable critic might say that the characters almost excuse the story.) Certainly there are no reservations to be made when they talk. Not one of the criticisms of Forster's characterization made or mentioned in the previous pages has to do with what the characters say. When they talk they are always credible; and Forster, wisely, allows the dialogue to carry most of the weight of the novel (though not all of it—a point which becomes very clear from the dramatization of *A Room with a View* by Stephen Tait and Kenneth Allott. The play is very thin compared with the novel).

It is quite another matter to claim, as Rose Macaulay and Burra claim, that Forster is one of our great story-tellers. To the average reader, plot has been Forster's weakness—as, of course, he himself practically says it is, in *Aspects of the Novel*; and it is not difficult to see faults which prevent the novels from being outstanding purely as stories.

One such fault is that the symbolism and the "story" proper do not always blend properly. An incident which may be acceptable on the level of symbol may not be acceptable on the level of plot; Forster lacks Melville's skill in fusing the two. No matter how complex the symbolism of *Moby Dick* and even though the whale may symbolise something different to each character in the novel—and something different to every reader!—the story is nearly always credible on the literal plane. Forster's early novels are rather in the position of the less experienced Melville's *Mardi*. And so, it has been noted, Rickie's fainting fit when he hears for the first time of his relationship to Stephen is incredible (and, if we believe it, the episode would do untold harm to our picture of Rickie). Or sometimes the symbol and story may even seem to pull in different ways. One such instance is when Agnes Pembroke breaks into the discussion between Rickie, Ansell and their friends on the question whether the cow is really there when no-one is by to see it. We are probably meant to see in this the fatal intrusion of Sawstonism into Cambridge. What we do see in it, however, on a first reading, is just as likely to be the intrusion of a little charm and practical common-sense into a rather trite argument. If we do see that, then it is some time before we again find our bearings with the story.

A second weakness in story-telling is a curious casualness, a refusal to hide the fact that the author is pulling strings. One example of this occurs early in *The Longest Journey*, in Ch. II:

Rickie . . . said abruptly—

"I think I want to talk."

"I think you do," replied Ansell.

"Shouldn't I be rather a fool if I went through Cambridge without talking? It's said never to come so easy again. All the people are dead too. I can't see why I shouldn't tell

you most things about my birth and parentage and education."

"Talk away. If you bore us, we have books."

With this invitation Rickie began to relate his history. The reader who has no book will be obliged to listen to it. (p. 29)

Unless the author wishes to remind us constantly that it is only a story he is telling—and I do not see why Forster should wish to remind us at this point—there is some justification for calling this an example of lack of technique or a failure in inventiveness, just as Jane Austen's habit of having a character, at a crucial moment of the story, write a letter, betrays lack of inventive power. The weakness may not, in this kind of "comic" novel, be serious; but it is a blemish on the story-telling as such. The unashamed recapitulation in the account of Rickie's mother's love affair is another example.

Thirdly—although it is in essence the same habit as the second one—there is the much-discussed over-use of surprise. The first instance of this comes quite early in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*:

As for Lilia, some one said to her, "It is a beautiful boy!"

But she had died in giving birth to him. (p. 77)

There is, to be sure, some slight preparation for this announcement of Lilia's death, in the quiet remark in the previous chapter that "she never took a solitary walk again, with one exception, till the day of her death" (p. 56). The intended effect is nevertheless of a sudden shock; and the method is repeated with the death of the baby himself. There is some indication that he is ill, when Harriet is carrying him off in the carriage (though there is no reason why he should be ill), and then the announcement of his death is made suddenly, in another short final sentence. "The face was already chilly, but thanks to Philip it was no longer wet. Nor would it again be wetted by any tear" (p. 183). But in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* this dropping of a stone into the still waters of a plot is simply a mannerism, in itself not unpleasant, although not all of us have, like Forster, "the sort of mind which *likes* to be taken unawares."<sup>17</sup>

In *The Longest Journey* the mannerism becomes a most noticeable and therefore very annoying habit, and we have the now notorious string of surprises. We begin in Ch. II, in

a conversation between Rickie and his mother, on the possibility of his catching cold if he goes out improperly clad:

He was not very often irritable or rude, but he answered, "Oh, I shan't catch cold. I do wish you wouldn't keep on bothering."

He did not catch cold, but while he was out his mother died. She only survived her husband eleven days, a coincidence which was recorded on their tombstone. (p. 36)

Next there is the opening of Ch. V: "Gerald died that afternoon. He was broken up in the football match" (p. 61), followed, much later, by the death of Rickie's baby. Rickie is told that the child will live, but be deformed as he is himself. "God was more merciful. A window was opened too wide on a draughty day. After a short, painless illness his daughter died." (p. 208) Then there is the death of Rickie's father: "There was to be no scandal. By the time they arrived Robert had been drowned" (p. 266). Finally (and consistently!) the death of Rickie himself is so announced.

It is unfair so to tabulate; and it may be that the man who gravely criticises is breaking a butterfly upon a wheel. But can one possibly defend? Lionel Trilling's attempt to do so<sup>18</sup> seems to me to fail. To compare sudden deaths and such surprises in the novel to a game of chess when "the value of all the pieces on the board may be changed by the removal of a single piece, the forces shifting and the game entering a new phase" is to say at the same time too little and too much—too little because the defence does not stop Professor Trilling himself from complaining that the reconciliation at the conclusion of *Howards End* is "rather forced," and too much because if the defence is valid at all it is a defence of all improbability in all fiction. And his earlier pronouncement, that "to accept Forster we have to know [sic] that *The Winter's Tale* is dramatically and morally sound and that improbability is the guide to life" is to beg the question—and will not convince those of us who continue to prefer *Hamlet* and the method of *Hamlet*. The danger of the Forster method is, simply, that it will make the reader laugh. And for Forster's reader to laugh at him can be of no more assistance to the final effect of his novel than can the mirth of an audience at Antigonus ("Exit-



pursued by a bear") reinforce the desired impression of *The Winter's Tale*.

Peter Burra's defence of Forster's plots as having "operatic truth"<sup>19</sup> is also, surely, a quibble. What *truth* has an opera libretto? All that really happens in an opera house is that we disregard the story or, it might be better to say, regard the absurdities of the story as the price we pay for the music. Our attitude towards the plot of *The Longest Journey*, it seems to me, must be very similar; we try to suspend our disbelief and are willing to do so because we think we thereby gain in the long run. But the story is not therefore good in itself; and it is absurd for Rose Macaulay to claim that it is "great."

It is refreshing to find that Forster himself does not attempt now to justify the method: he does what is far wiser and laughs at it (and, to be sure, at its critics). This is in his essay on "The Raison d'Être of Criticism in the Arts," originally a lecture contributed to a symposium on "Music and Criticism" at Harvard and now reprinted in *Two Cheers for Democracy*:

... I can truly say with Mr. Day Lewis that I have nearly always found criticism irrelevant . . . One can eliminate a particular defect perhaps; to substitute merit is the difficulty. I remember that in one of my earlier novels I was blamed for the number of sudden deaths in it which were said to amount to forty-four per cent of the fictional population. I took heed, and arranged that characters in subsequent novels should die less frequently and give previous notice where possible by means of illness or some other acceptable device. But I was not inspired to put anything vital in the place of sudden deaths. The only remedy for a defect is inspiration, the subconscious stuff that comes up in a bucket. (p. 129)

But if Forster never did put "anything vital" in place of his sudden deaths and their equivalents—as *A Passage to India* shows—he did certainly give them less importance in his plots.

What can be said—and cannot be said too strongly—is what Forster went on to say in this same lecture: that such defects may be "vital to the general conception." They do not therefore cease to be defects, but they are not necessarily to be remedied by mere substitution. And so even though the justice of the particular criticism be admitted, it may well be that

any critical suggestion for amelioration should be ignored lest the whole be spoilt.

It is worth noting that Forster's main weakness in storytelling—let us call it string-pulling—is a danger most natural to the omniscient method of narration. But that method has its virtues too and may indeed be the best possible one if the author's personality is to be an important element in the whole. It is so with Forster; and that is why one must add to the outstanding qualities of these earlier novels (and, of course of the later two also) what, for want of a better word, must be called style.

Their style is perhaps the quality of these books that is first noticed; certainly it is the one that is never forgotten. Forster's style is, as we might expect, free from jargon, pure. In the narrow sense, only one criticism has ever been made of it, and Forster tells us of that himself (in the same essay on "The Raison d'Etre of Criticism in the Arts"):

The second way in which criticism can help the artist is more specific. It can help him over details, niggling details, minutiae of style. To refer to my own work again, I have certainly benefited by being advised not to use the word "but" so often. I have had a university education, you see, and it disposes one to overwork that particular conjunction. It is the strength of the academic mind to be fair and see both sides of a question. It is its weakness to be timid and to suffer from that fear-of-giving-oneself-away disease of which Samuel Butler speaks. Both its strength and its weakness incline it to the immoderate use of "but." A good many "buts" have occurred to-day, but not as many as if I had not been warned. (p. 130)<sup>20</sup>

In the wider and, of course, more important sense, there has also been general appreciation of Forster's "style." Trilling says (p. 32) that it sometimes "becomes arch, whimsical and feminine"—and so it does; but Trilling is fully appreciative of its general effect, an effect of urbane but never stilted conversation. This has been well described by E. B. C. Jones, who speaks particularly of "the interpolations which break up the dialogue, with an elegant colloquialism of style which prevents them sounding pontifical, even when they express the author's own views."<sup>21</sup>

Forster's is, in fact, the perfect ironic manner; and it cannot be accidental that so many of the great novelists who have used the omniscient method have been masters of irony. Fielding and Thackeray leap to mind. The irony, no doubt, provides what Lytton Strachey might have called the necessary antiseptic quality—necessary since with this method a reader is instantly aware of his discomfort if the novelist takes himself or his character too seriously. A typical Forster sentence is (from *Where Angels Fear to Tread*): "The train reached Charing Cross and they parted—he to go to a matinee, she to buy petticoats for the corpulent poor" (p. 89); and it is quite noticeable that this comes at a point when Caroline has just been re-established in the reader's good-will by her confession that she blames herself for Lilia's marriage. The reference to "the corpulent poor" ensures, without obvious intrusion on the author's part, that she shall not be *too* firmly established.

At times it might be thought that Forster goes perilously close to breaking his own rule that the author should never take the reader into his confidence about his characters—as in this paragraph from *Where Angels Fear to Tread*:

She turned away her head when Gino lifted his son to his lips. This was something too remote from the prettiness of the nursery. The man was majestic; he was a part of Nature; in no ordinary love scene could he ever be so great. For a wonderful physical tie binds the parents to the children; and—by some sad, strange irony—it does not bind us children to our parents. For if it did, if we could answer their love not with gratitude but with equal love, life would lose much of its pathos and much of its squalor, and we might be wonderfully happy. Gino passionately embracing, Miss Abbott reverently averting her eyes—both of them had parents whom they did not love so very much. (p. 155-6)

But perhaps he has not really broken it, for—and this is characteristic of him—the particular (here the pair of characters) is seen in the light of the universal, about which he makes his editorial comment. What Forster has to say at such times is always worth listening to and it may well be that it is better worth listening to than it would be if he had his eye firmly on the single character. There is no loss of "illusion and nobil-

ity" and certainly no loss of "intimacy" either; and the generalizations give the Forster novels their over-all effect of humane and un-pompous wisdom.

It is natural, then, for his style to veer towards the epigram; and not for the world would one part with a single Forster epigram, whether one agrees with it or whether one disagrees—as one notably withholds full assent from

"If I had a girl, I'd keep her in line," is not the remark of a fool nor of a cad. Rickie had not kept his wife in line. He had shown her all the workings of his soul, mistaking this for love; and in consequence she was the worse woman after two years of marriage . . . (*The Longest Journey*, p. 279)

But agreement or disagreement is mostly beside the point (unless, indeed, it be argued that this philosophy is inconsistent with the creed of personal relationships); it is the brilliance of the phrasing, as much as the turn of the thought, that attracts; and of how many English novels could it be said that they combine for us the conversational charm of an essay by Lamb and the ironical tang of a satire by Byron or Pope?

But the great writers of conversational or satirical literature are rarely successful at the "poetic" kind as well; and I do, with Savage, question one quality in Forster's style—what that critic calls (p. 51) the "'poetical' vagueness" of some of the passages, notably at crises, for instance when Rickie sees Agnes in Gerald's embrace. One need not agree that "this sort of false, overripe writing indicates some basic uncertainty in Forster's grasp of life"; but it is true that such passages will not, in the early novels, bear the weight thrown upon them. This is the great moment of Agnes's life, possibly of Gerald's; and it is because of this incident that we are later asked to alter our whole attitude to him.

Forster's early novels, then, do show signs of relative immaturity, both in the over-simplification of theme and in manner. *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* are subtler in their judgments and freer from such faults as overwriting; moreover in them—and one cannot always say this of a writer's more mature novels—the virtues of the early fiction *all* remain.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Collected Impressions* (London, 1950), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Forster's statement of his own faith in personal relationships may be found in his paper *What I Believe* (1939), reprinted in his second volume of essays *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London, 1951).

<sup>3</sup>"Notes on the English Character," reprinted in the first collected volume of essays *Abinger Harvest* (London, 1936), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Originally in the volume of short-stories also called *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911), now incorporated in *The Collected Short Stories of E. M. Forster* (London, 1947).

<sup>5</sup>"Other Kingdom," in *The Celestial Omnibus*.

<sup>6</sup>Page references to the novels are to the Uniform Pocket Edition of 1947.

<sup>7</sup>Lee Elbert Holt, "E. M. Forster and Samuel Butler," *PMLA*, LXI (1946), 804-19.

<sup>8</sup>Forster's comment is recorded by P. N. Furbank and F. J. H. Haskell, in an account of an interview, published in *The Paris Review*, Spring 1953, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup>*The Writings of E. M. Forster* (London, 1938), p. 91.

<sup>10</sup>*Poets and Story-Tellers* (London, 1949), p. 190.

<sup>11</sup>At the same time, there is greater subtlety in the account of Henry Wilcox's kissing Margaret Schlegel, *Howards End*, p. 194.

<sup>12</sup>"E. M. Forster," in *Scrutiny* VII, 2 (Sept. 1938). The essay is reprinted, with a few modifications, in *The Common Pursuit* (London, 1952) from which I quote (p. 263).

<sup>13</sup>*The Death of the Moth* (London, 1942), p. 110.

<sup>14</sup>In his essay "The Novels of E. M. Forster," originally published in *The Nineteenth Century and After* (Nov. 1934) and now reprinted as the Introduction to *A Passage to India* in the Everyman's Library edition (1942).

<sup>15</sup>*The Withered Branch* (London, 1950) pp. 53-4 and 55. Cf. Frank Swinnerton's summary of Stephen as "an incalculable and savage bore for whom the author has a mystical veneration" (*The Georgian Literary Scene*, Everyman's Library, 1936, p. 289). But I should like to add that on many counts I strongly disagree with Savage's study.

<sup>16</sup>*E. M. Forster* (London, 1950), p. 9.

<sup>17</sup>"A Book that influenced me" (1944), reprinted in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, p. 226.

<sup>18</sup>*E. M. Forster* (London, 1944), pp. 57-8.

<sup>19</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. xvi.

<sup>20</sup>In all proper humility, I add that Forster is too fond of the tautological "both (had the) same . . ." construction; that in his endeavor to obtain colloquial effect he often misplaces his "only"; and that once or twice he creates ambiguity by a somewhat careless use of pronouns.

<sup>21</sup>"E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf" in *The English Novelists* ed. Verschoyle (London, 1936), p. 271.

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## The Romantic Tragedy of Self in *World Enough and Time*

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More fully than in his other works, Robert Penn Warren in *World Enough and Time* elaborates the tragedy of a man betrayed by inner insufficiency. This insufficiency takes the form of a temperamental romanticism which transforms things from what they are into what they are not. So deep-seated is this uncontrolled romanticism and its correlative—the abnegation of the critical intellect—that self-knowledge comes too late to retrieve the disaster springing from the “inward sore / Of self that cankers at the bone.” Jeremiah Beaumont’s promising life has been thrown away in following will-of-the-wisps which had originally promised to be embodiments of the “noble idea.” All Warren’s novels, in fact, chronicle the tragic wasting of human resources through a continuing failure by their protagonists, even when essentially admirable, to attain wholeness of vision. The presence, in varying degrees, of a naive and uncritical idealism and a naive and uncritical intellectuality constitutes the tragic flaw in Warren’s heroes. They alternately take themselves too seriously or not seriously enough: they too intensely feel their own temperamental uniqueness and importance, while they fail to comprehend fully the moral and philosophical implications of what they do. Thus in *All the King’s Men* Jack Burden can neither fathom the riddle of Willie Stark nor determine his own place in the scheme of things until his pride is shattered; in *At Heaven’s Gate*, Jerry Calhoun is powerless to circumvent the influence of Brogan Murdock which he comes to recognize as malign; and in *Night Rider*, Mr. Munn cannot make effectual his ideals because of his pride and political ignorance.

In *World Enough and Time*, Warren uses the frame of history to isolate spiritual misadventure. History provides an

implicit commentary upon the tragedy of misguided aspiration. It enhances at once the value of the aspiration, since too few in any era are capable of emotional intensities, and the poignancy of its futility, since any one person's conflicts, no matter how absorbing to him, become relatively insignificant in the historic process. Jeremiah Beaumont is assimilated to his own era; his guilt, futility, and redemption are, therefore, implicit in the philosophical premises of nineteenth-century romanticism. Certain aspects of romanticism undermine his character before some of them, at least, can be redirected to work his salvation. Dynamic qualities in Beaumont, traceable to an unreflective immersion in environmental romanticism, are a self-conscious innocence, an obsessive individualism, self-deception, an aggressive self-aggrandizement, an infinite longing for a disembodied ecstasy or a merging with the "Absolute," an impatience with limitation, a need for a single-minded purity in psychology, a histrionic pretentiousness, an idyllic optimism alternating with a posturing despair, a sadistic gusto, a pantheistic exaltation, a blunting of moral distinctions, and a disregard of social obligations. In short, his intensity of wayward vision envelops others to their destruction: he extinguishes Rachel's strength of mind and eventually her body, and he kills, for the loftiest reasons, Colonel Fort, potentially the wisest man of his day. Jeremiah is truly "*une ame maudite*," spoiling his own life, and involving others in disaster, simply by virtue of his being an innocent.

Unable to modify his inflexible prejudices, Jeremiah continually deceives himself. As a young man he first had felt the disparity between the illusion and the reality, but was powerless to dispel its disruptive force. He had become aware of the great gulf between his longings—the "idea" of glory—and the actualities of life: his quest for spiritual beatitude had ended in a sordid sexual act, and his quest for earthly security had ended in a quarrel with his grandfather. The romantic aspiration for an infinite ecstasy takes more thorough hold of him later; yet continued disappointment of these ideal expectations does nothing to modify their fervor and their unreason. Romanticism, recognizing man in T. E. Hulme's phrase as "an infinite reservoir of possibilities," inspires in Jeremiah this quest

for the infinite and this impatience with limitation. His romantic bent is so strong that he willfully disregards all realities that would cause him to revise his prejudices; his deliberate, if unconscious choice, therefore, is to live in a world of false illusion. He lives too much in the world of dreams or the world of romance, and cannot separate the fancied from the actual, the conventions of literature from the realities of life. Jeremiah wishes to belong to the world but finds he cannot; at the local tavern after his marriage, he almost becomes a part of the world but he cannot discard his self-induced alienation. When challenged by others about his motives for marrying Rachel, he evades the positive effort necessary to extinguish the unworthy doubts which follow. He prefers to think of Fort as the sacrificial scapegoat whose blood will wash away this alleged stain to his honor. It is easier to externalize one's conflicts into an enthusiastic, all-enveloping crusade than it is to resolve them intellectually. Jeremiah is always too concerned with how he will appear in other people's eyes to be resolutely true to how he will appear in his own eyes.

His imperfect realism brings calamity, because it encourages a disordered life and a high-flown contempt of the actual in a continued pursuit of the impossible abstract ideal of remolding the world nearer the heart's desire. "Nothing was wrong with him which he could properly explain, even to himself. Nothing was wrong except that the world was the way it was." A sense of mundane reality—"the satisfactions of work and the turn of the seasons to show the fruit of his labor . . . the labor for a general good and the justice of Relief, his joy in the love of Rachel, his hope for the future and the child"—he rejects because it cannot be reconciled to the abstractions by which he governs himself. He does not realize that the Idea must be brought to the test of the world, and achieve thereby a more than bloodless existence if it is to redeem rather than to destroy. Only at the very end when he emerges from the chrysalis of self does he have an urgent sense of this when he feels, "There must be a way whereby the word becomes flesh. There must be a way whereby the flesh becomes word."



Despite his ingrained emotionalism and his impossible aspirations, he feels the need for a coherent explanation of an intrinsically incoherent world. This coherence, at the explicit level he desires it, he will not recognize as impossible through the nature of things. From his early days he had had in his religious moments the feeling that he was "the victim of some gigantic joke or conspiracy," which he was unable to understand or to cope with. "The blindness of man's fate" distresses him unduly since there is nothing in his philosophy to account for the irrational nature of reality. He always tries to order reality, not to understand the conditions under which it can be ordered.

Taking a creator's pride in fashioning a grandiose drama from his life, Jeremiah delights in the ingenuity with which he attempts to make the actuality conform to his exalted illusions. He always dramatizes self instead of trying to understand it; he must become the "transcendental ego" and be spectator to the pageant of his own life—a reductive and pretentious self-scrutiny which Irving Babbitt called "romantic irony"—even when, as at his trial for murder, he is fighting for his life. His previous attempt to play knight-errant has failed—he had worn a red ribbon, the color of blood, as his lady's favor when he had set out to murder Fort. When one theatrical action fails, he thinks of another inflatedly dramatic scene to play out. He confesses to his mentor, Burnham, that all his tragedy began when Burnham taught him "the nobleness of life." Since he is, he feels, doomed, he would not now die "less than Roman" and he commissions Burnham to get him laudanum. Jeremiah had planned a truly magnificent end for himself and Rachel, a double suicide complete with exotic trappings. The emetic effect of the laudanum mixture, however, Jeremiah had not counted on. Instead of an exalted end in their subterranean fastness, the lovers retch. Instead of glorious death, there is physical prostration: this abortive "Liebestod" emphasized symbolically the falsity of a too enthusiastically embraced subjective ideal. It is not so much Jeremiah's instincts and ideas that are wrong but their fatal exaggeration when he objectifies them in action. As Warren contends, it may be impossible for a man to live "unless he prepares a drama" to shore up his human

identity "against the ruck of the world." But Beaumont's drama is too grandiloquent and humorless. His obsession with his own uniqueness places him, to his undoing, too squarely beyond merely human good and evil.

Prior to the end of the novel, Jeremiah Beaumont is too consciously lofty to be morally great, too proud of ordering his own destiny to achieve greatness of destiny, too attitudinizing for the selflessness and the humane equability indispensable to a true, as opposed to a romantically inflated, nobility. Fort has, however, humility and a knowledge of his own insufficiency. Paradoxically, Fort reaches a modicum of greatness through a minimizing of his powers. Fort is human in his frailty and does not, like Jeremiah Beaumont, pretend to be above frailty. Fort, a fallen human being, is not beyond sin but is not proud of it. Fort is in his way great because he is "not embarrassed by the accent of greatness," because he does not seek greatness, because his humanity is spontaneous, because his suffering and knowledge of men induces a haunting tragic sense.

Beaumont's destructive pride, the form his misapplied creative energy assumes, contrasts with Fort's creative humility. Like the Ancient Mariner's crime as Warren describes it, Jeremiah's is also that of pride, of the will conceived in abstraction, existing outside of time and the chain of cause and effect, unchastened by any human motive or feeling. Jeremiah, like the Ancient Mariner (and all mankind), is conceived in "original sin,"—"from our mothers' wombs our understandings are darkened," says Coleridge—but he comes only to a slow realization of this. Like the Mariner and his comrades, the unregenerate Jeremiah judges the morality of an act in terms of its personal advantage rather than in terms of its originating spiritual source, the condition of the will.

The disappointment of Jeremiah's hopes for peace in the West is ironic. Like other improvident dreamers who never find rest within, Jeremiah always hopes for beatitude in new surroundings. He seeks for peace outside himself because his inner life is too disjointed for wholeness to irradiate from within: he is incapable of the detachment which would give his energies direction, though he is capable of the objectivity of an ener-

vating, self-scrutinizing irony. He seeks escape in a new land, escape from a self that will never give him rest, for "Innocence is Motion, Innocence is Time, Innocence is West." Jeremiah's nostalgia is that of the romantic temperament for some place of ideal peace and loneliness, where the self-tortured soul can find sympathy and healing for the coldness of this world.

The ideal Eden of Beaumont's fancy had always been the far West—beyond the reaches of the civilized. Now that he is about to attain his fancied Eldorado as a refugee from justice, he suspects, with sickening dread, that his illusions have been extravagant. His brutal guides, Moe Sullins and Jenkins, the greyness of the land overhung with rain and mist, the physical exhaustion of Rachel on the trip, and Jenkins's description of the place they go to as one where "nobody keers what yore name is or what you have done" increases his apprehension. This has been a pilgrimage to a land of degradation to parallel the inner degradation—unconscious as yet to him in his pride—that Jeremiah Beaumont has undergone. This brutalized pilgrimage to the far West is ironically at variance with Jeremiah's still continuing quest for a disembodied nobility. His first impression of the settlement brings back the memory of his visit as a youth to his Grandfather Marcher's "where all seemed sodden and bemused past the human hope"; he is thus overpowered by the realization "that a man might live his years and end but where he began," an implied parody upon the romantic notion of the glorious eternal return. Instead of the brilliant land of his imagination, there is a squalid settlement ruled by the sensualist river pirate, La Grand' Bosse. Even Rachel's beauty fades here. Jeremiah's revulsion at her ugliness, when he finds they are prisoners, is as overcharged as the force of his passion which had, in the first place, broken down Rachel's resistance to him. He now looks at her countenance and finds a pronounced brown blotch on it—a blemish to her beauty and a symbol of spiritual decay like Jeremiah's subsequently acquired venereal sore. As he gazes on her faded countenance, he asks in anguish, "Was it all for this, was it all for this?" He is even tortured by the fact that La Grand' Bosse has rejected Rachel as concubine, despite his knowledge

that, had Bosse taken her, his own life would have been torment. The only peace he can now find is in the "single, separate, dark massive moment that swells up flatly like a bubble from the deep mud." He is overwhelmed by his discovery that "in the beginning there was the Word and the Word was with God, but in the end there is the mud and the mud is with me." The mindlessness of this hopeless abandonment to natural force recalls his frenetic abdication to sensual passion in his prison cell.

Disappointed at the sordidness of his life in exile, Jeremiah takes to drink; at Rachel's mild remonstrance, he is confirmed in his debauchery, and becomes increasingly cruel and abstracted toward the person who had inspired his spiritual quest. Through her greater realism and honesty, Rachel could have helped Jeremiah had he been able to learn from her:

I had never entered into that region where her soul abode and kept its house. Oh, might I have done so! And had I done so, I might have followed her glimmering as through the maze of a dark forest and come upon her at last in some sunlit glade and sat with her calmly there upon the grass, holding her hand. Then all might have been different.

He could not learn from Rachel, however, because he has intellectualized away all spontaneity from his passion, with the result that he can no longer feel "the holiness of the heart's affections" and be instructed spiritually by them. Rachel is, moreover, "sunk in her own darkness," and he could not now get to enter her soul even if he wanted to.

In purposeless fashion, he turns from her to pursue knowledge in the abstract, "lapped in the arrogant chastity" of this desire, reading the Testament in the original Greek. This becomes as blind and insatiable a passion as that for drink; the Faust-like pursuit of knowledge divorced from the spirit is an unpardonable sin, and more reprehensible, if anything, than Jeremiah's previous aspiration after pure spirit divorced from knowledge. Arrested in his preoccupation with self by a realization that Rachel is losing her reason, he finds to his dismay that he has no other resource. Though Jeremiah pretends to be a law unto himself, he is unable to withstand adversity with patience. He actually lacks the self-reliance and independence

he has romantically flaunted at other times. His is an individualism without stabilizing doctrine or intellectuality to give it base. He is proto-Nietzschean in most of his attitudes save that he lacks redeeming moral strength. Like the Martin Decoud Warren depicts in his essay on *Nostromo*, Jeremiah Beaumont cannot endure when thrown back upon himself.

As measure of his customary impassioned belief in self, there is Jeremiah's naive elation in the murder of Fort. He had keenly anticipated this exaltation ever since he first took Rachel in his arms—a decadent fusion of ecstatic love with an ecstatic fixation upon the shedding of blood, a sadism Jeremiah conveniently rationalizes as the claim of honor upon him:

The moment when he should strike Fort and the moment when he should at last take her into his arms fused into one moment, the two acts became one act, the secret of life, and all that lay between him and the act was ugly and meaningless.

Jeremiah Beaumont has the superb conviction in the rightness of his act that an innocent child would feel in having carried out the command of its parent. To Jeremiah the act of revenge is simple and God-appointed; the goodness of his intentions in his eyes precludes the need for exhaustive scrutiny of his behavior; little does he realize that Duty, rigidly conceived, may be entirely pernicious. At the time of his trial for Fort's murder, in the midst of the blood he had shed and the lies which hem him in, he holds fast to his preconceived ideal of innocence, until Munn Short, his jailor, makes him uncomfortably aware that a true innocence is heart-felt and outgoing rather than intellectual and ingrown, "innocent only is the heart music . . ." As Warren implies in the poem, "Love's Parable," the only valuable innocence is earned through spiritual travail, and transcends the evil it cannot ignore. Any other kind—especially the abstracted sort which fails to ensure its integrity through a recognition of the Evil which threatens it—is purely an accident and has but a fortuitous relevance to the real truth, as Hilton Hawgood claims:

"For innocence—it is an accident. It is always an accident. We did not do it for accidental innocence. No—we did it for—for truth. For truth, Beaumont . . . What else is there to do for? That's all there is, and nothing can hurt it. Not our lies or guilts, for it is bigger. It is higher. And we know it is there. Even if we cannot see it. Nothing can hurt it. Not even our innocence can hurt it!"

An inward innocence does not demand, in Jeremiah's philosophy, an innocence in fact; innocence in his view is personally predetermined and bears little relationship to ultimate truth. He can readily rationalize, therefore, any degree of guilt in the actual world of men.

He also feels at one with nature, and his emotional exaltation soon assumes mystical overtones. In a lilac thicket just before the murder he rests his cheek on a twig outside the window of Fort's home and feels suffusing through his veins a pantheist glow—reminiscent of an experience he had had in youth when he touched a snow-laden beech. The intensity of the emotion he now focuses upon his project makes him at one with nature and with God. Like other romantics, as Paul Elmer More described them, Jeremiah succumbs to "the illusion of beholding the infinite within the stream of nature, instead of apart from that stream." He feels that "all had moved to this moment"; his criminal purpose now has an apparent transcendental sanction, precisely because he adjudges it noble. What amounts to lynch law has now its ideal justification in the appeal Jeremiah makes through Nature to a divine benevolence. Again Jeremiah oversimplifies experience in his innocence, failing to realize that in nature creative primitive energies and stark evil are both present and that the exaltation nature inspires cannot altogether be acknowledged divine. Unless we are lacking in spiritual humility, our fallen condition, our common guilt, our beclouded perceptions cannot permit us the presumption of accepting at its apparent mystical value such an externalized source for emotional intoxication. Granted that God reveals his sacramental presence to man through nature, that nature is ultimately spiritual in essence, and that Jeremiah has an in-

tuition of this, he immerses himself too headlong in it. Such naturalistic fervor without the infusion of human sympathy leads to spiritual paralysis, despite the overflow of spirit in its communion with nature or despite the intellectual conviction that through such mysticism we become divine. A subjective sympathy with nature has to be supplemented, therefore, with a more objective range of values. Nature or the wilderness in the novel becomes, in part, an emblem of original sin, since it holds in solution both the destructive and the spiritual. These contradictory forces are also to be found in precarious balance in the soul of man.

The quest for the Absolute, divorced from all contingencies in actuality, can never be satisfied, and its aching persistence brings calamity: witness the fates of characters in works so diverse as *Faust*, *Manfred*, Hawthorne's *The Birthmark*, and Balzac's *The Devil of the Absolute*. Jeremiah's intuition into the absolute order of the world is too easily achieved, it is too little earned by personal suffering or by intellectual effort, and it represents a too expeditious victory of unity over diversity. It follows from the tendency in romanticism to confuse the human realm with the Absolute or religious realm. His super-human aspiration carries within it the seeds of havoc as we find them also in romantic heroes like Werther, Julien Sorel, or Heathcliff. At all costs, Jeremiah wishes for that delusive peace described in Warren's poem "Crime" as "past despair and past the uncouth isolation." Actually, Jeremiah's apprehension of the Absolute Truth, which, according to him, can alone justify a man's pretensions, is too shadowy to be meaningful. He is so in love with the One that he forgets the Many; when he courts Rachel he is carried away, as he reads to her from "The Symposium," by Socrates' vision of the Idea of Absolute Beauty as the highest beatitude. Abstract Platonic essences appeal to the romantic who wishes to despise the inconvenient facts.

Jeremiah learns slowly that spiritual truth is not only instinctive and self-regarding, a matter of inner conviction, but something which transcends the self and comprehends it in



relation to other men. Until too late, he does not understand Fort's dictum that "it is iniquity for any man to forget he is not alone and that the good of other men is his duty, and that the state is our life." Jeremiah lacks the sense of the human community because he is devoted to abstractions and dazzled by a bizarre conception of his self-importance. He has moral fervor but it is turned inward to satisfy his intense soul, so that other individuals in his eyes lose intrinsic value. At the trial, he has "some air of self-complaisance which wins regard but not hearts." Like Conrad's Kurtz or Decoud as Warren has described them, Jeremiah is "the sinner against human solidarity and the human mission." He does not realize soon enough how self-centered he has always been, how ruinous natural grandeur in human nature unrelieved by love of mankind can be. Having rejected society after his crime for the promise of peace in the wilderness, Jeremiah finally sees that his life as outcast is a veritable death-in-life, and as a means to his own salvation, he again tries to establish his connection with humanity by going back to Frankfurt to deliver himself over to the law. He can now understand at last the Kantian injunction to use men as ends rather than as means; he had even used his wife Rachel to gratify his romantic predilections instead of forgetting self in affection for her. The need Jeremiah feels to participate in the community when his resources of self fail is a sense of responsibility which his libertarian nature had previously scorned.

At the end, the facts and the moral order they support can be denied no longer. Because its objective existence could not be demonstrated to the earlier Beaumont, he had rejected its provenance; his conversion convinces him of the impossibility of living either in intellect or emotion alone, without a positive ethic. Only after his noble purpose in killing Fort boomerangs and blots out all possibilities of earthly glory does he realize that the task of the intellect is not to prove the existence of the moral world, but to accept and explore it. He then rejects the romantic ideal of aggrandizement of self in acknowledging moral limitations upon the expansive ego. Realizing, too, the



universal presence of evil in man and nature and the need for spiritual grace to be delivered from it, he passes from a dangerous innocence to spiritual sophistication.

As Warren states in his essay on *Nostromo*, it is "man's fate and his only triumph" to serve an idea of some sort. All along, Jeremiah had realized that men need philosophical sanctions to order their lives; until too late, he has embraced the wrong ones. His quest, though arduous and potentially worthwhile, has all but been wasted. There are, ironically, depths in Beaumont, but he shies away at first from exploring them fully because their honest recognition then would entail a moral consistency at variance with his quixotic idealism. With respect to Jeremiah's insistent question, "Was all for naught?"—the last words, too, in the book—we are to infer that his life had value. For he has reached inward to the vital forces lying deep within personality and he wishes to capitalize upon them. He has a sense, too, of the constricting influence of an unimaginatively embraced tradition and respectability. Better than these are the violence and contamination that fall to Jeremiah Beaumont, Warren would imply, for he at least is not complacent. Sensitive enough to realize the barrenness of "the terrorless intellect," Jeremiah is one of those tortured souls whose ability to experience life and to gain from it inner light distinguishes him from men like Wilkie, the Parhams, La Grand' Bosse, and the Jenkins brothers, whose hollowness is complete. Their naturalism deifies the empiric fact, while Jeremiah's aspires after the spiritual principle behind the facts.

Warren's focus, however, is in large part ironic, since he refuses to sentimentalize the traditional attributes of the "romantic hero" Jeremiah represents. Throughout the novel Warren subjects Jeremiah's motives to rigid scrutiny and establishes the fallibility of heroic strength when it scorns mere human weakness. Despite all its inner intensities, the self-sufficient heroism which Jeremiah consistently emulates inhibits inner development and encourages no valid knowledge of intrinsic values. When it turns outward for external confirmation of

alleged greatness, it finds, in reality, only what it delusively seeks for. For most of the novel, therefore, Jeremiah Beaumont is its hero in name only, if a hero is one with whom we are to share the fullest sympathy. Because of his excesses, Jeremiah actually becomes its villain, while the villain in his fancy, Colonel Fort, despite his patent imperfections, becomes its informing center.

Yet Jeremiah has a largeness of soul which never quite induces our alienation, even when he is most sanctimoniously self-righteous and evil. In his non-resistance to Jeremiah, Fort has some sense, too, of Jeremiah's worth, maniacal as he has become in his obsession with revenge. Jeremiah as generalized symbol for fallen man, guilty of the original sin of self-sufficient pride, incites also that concern we feel for our own guilt. When Jeremiah at last sees himself as he has been, the sincerity of his conversion is in proportion to the evil he has, in some degree unwittingly, generated. To understand the novel aright, we must therefore be aware in its last pages of Warren's inversion of its inversion, his negation of its negation. The personality of Jeremiah then becomes more than satiric commentary upon romantic excess, it becomes the positive impulsion in the book. Beaumont is no longer the "hero" of romantic travesty; he becomes the indisputable tragic protagonist who not only triumphs over forces that defeated him but who uses them to attain Grace. In its intensity, his temperamental romanticism is no longer a liability, but provides the radical energy accessory to his conversion. In showing that rebirth is possible only to those who feel deeply, his sympathies are romantic.

The impulse of revolt is paradoxically both spiritual and anarchic. Though Warren stresses Beaumont's anarchy, he also is sharply conscious of his restless aspiration. If moral anarchy leads to murder, emotional responsiveness leads to remorse and regeneration. Jeremiah's quest for psychic illumination is ultimately rewarded, irrespective of its calamitous results to himself and to Fort—though Warren never lets us forget that incursion

of spiritual power at so great a price is tragic, if not nefarious. While nothing can excuse his crime, Jeremiah has at least a soul to be humanized.

The romantic was ever on the alert for the transcendent, the ineffable, which would pierce beyond the spiritless actuality, and he was always concerned with what man may become. Though Jeremiah willfully disregards the facts in his mania for becoming, this desire for becoming is positive as well as negative. A man may aspire towards the angelic as well as the demonic, towards Baudelairean transcendence as well as Baudelairean degradation. The demonic and the angelic both transcend the limits of the natural and the rational, and are the opposite poles toward which fervent souls can aspire. If subjective impulsions, directed inward to the self, give us the DeSades of actuality and the D'Annunzian heroes of fiction, these same impulsions, directed outward, give rise to the ethic intelligence of Goethe and Wordsworth, of those who use inner purity in the service of God and man. Trapped by his fervent personality, Jeremiah becomes a criminal in trying to exemplify his own concept of nobility, but he is also, by the magnetic affinity between polar opposites and by his very preoccupation with nobility, a potential saint. In its aggressive denial of the divine, the demonic, one pole in romanticism, has within it the seeds of its opposite. The situation is tragic, when, as with Beaumont, negative impulsions immobilize until too late potentially stronger motivations of a positive kind. When intermittent sincerity and intensity like Jeremiah's are present, egocentric flamboyance of personality can yield to fullness of soul—both are equivocally included within the complex of attitudes called romanticism. One way, Jeremiah Beaumont represents the dissolution of personality as it is absorbed into the directionless flux of the external world without the counter-balance of inner standards for control. Another way his restless questing embodies a craving for spiritual irradiation, and a thirst for a regenerative influx to transform his vision and revitalize the vision of others. If, through his initial lack of discipline, he is delayed in attaining wholeness, he has had even then its

germs to contrast with the caricatures respectively of idealism and worldliness, Skrogg and Wilkie.

The book relies too greatly upon travesty and irony in defining Beaumont's character, so that its discussion of ultimate issues is too intellectual and abstract. The novel is at times deficient in emotional force, with the result that we are too far removed from Jeremiah Beaumont's difficulties despite our implication in them. Lacking universally respected spiritual authority, the modern age demands that its artists also be philosophers, so that in Warren's metaphysical type of fiction, it is natural for the intellectual to predominate over the emotional. Consequently, the symbolic lines of Warren's characters are often more striking than their individualities. To compensate for this discursiveness and diminished impact is Warren's urgent sense of mission, the instilling in modern man an awareness of his religious heritage and the need for spiritual restoration. In the best sense an eclectic and a truth-seeker, Warren juxtaposes through a conscious effort of the intellect the incongruities of existence to arrive at uniquely sharp insights into reality. Haunted by the depth and complexity of life, Warren in a naturalistic age has reasserted the provenance of the spirit, and has enriched our experience by encompassing both the dangers and the glories of the subjective life.

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# The Symbolism of T. F. Powys

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In *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, Virginia Woolf remarks that Bennett's fiction is so bound up (in the wrong way) with life that the reader must complete his response to it by writing a check or joining a society. And she might well have said much the same of the other Edwardians (Wells, especially) and even, perhaps, of some Georgians. Perhaps there is too much of Chandrapore and the Indian Civil Service in *Passage to India*; of Dublin in *Ulysses*; of Lawrence, Frieda Lawrence, Murry, and Mansfield at Higher Tregerthen in *Women in Love*; and of the prohibition era in *The Great Gatsby* and *Manhattan Transfer*. The Georgians, unlike the Edwardians and the proletarian novelists of the thirties, do not ask us to write checks or join societies; but they do tempt us to take their symbols literally.

Of the Georgians, T. F. Powys is surely the furthest removed from realism and naturalism and the farthest gone in symbolism (though the former are so influential that his novels and stories have been read—and both admired and loathed—as both true and false *reportage*, and though his sort of symbolism is hardly fashionable). He is, indeed, so given to symbolism as to be almost literally incapable of writing in any other mode. His fiction is impersonal and universal, and at the same time individual: impersonal because it is autobiographical only in embodying his values and beliefs; universal because it is not “timely” and has no program”; and individual because it is impersonal and universal and, hence, not naturalistic, and because its symbolism is in a different tradition from that of the other Georgians. He is a character in only one piece (the short story “The House with the Echo,” probably the earliest in composition of any of his published stories); only two of his short stories (“The House with the Echo” and “The Stored Barns,” another early one), and none of his novels,

are written in the first person; and none of his characters are novelists. In fact, life untransmuted scarcely gets into his fiction at all. There are many literary allusions (including one to his brother John's novel *Wood and Stone*), though their function is neither verisimilitude nor ostentation; there are a few references to the First World War and to actual places and particular dates; the Reverend Hector Turnbull, in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, is a Conservative; Mary Crowle, in *Black Bryony*, is a member of the Salvation Army; "Nor Iron Bars" has a passing reference to Communists; "The Left Leg" contains an allusion to the ambitiously phallic neolithic giant carved in the hill behind Cerne Abbas, Dorset; and Mr. Weston, in *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, drives a Ford and bought the chain for his symbolical lion at Woolworth's. A few characters and incidents, moreover, seem to have some analogues in the real world: for example, Mrs. Fancy, the Portstown landlady in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, probably owes something to the Mrs. Fancy with whom Powys, his brother John, and their friend Bernard O'Neill roomed in Weymouth for a few days just after the turn of the century; and the novella "The Two Thieves" was written (Powys confesses) about a real person, a Suffolk laborer named (as he is in the novella) Roe. But Powys gives and demands of us little particular information about anything. He largely excludes persons, places, and events that have spatio-temporal coordinates, preferring artificial characters, fictitious settings, and imaginary events; and, to understand his fiction, we need no map of Dorset, no directory of its pubs, and no monographs on its folklore, folkways, or rural occupations. Essentially the only untransmuted actuality that gets into his fiction is language, which is, of course, on a level different from that of the constructs symbolized by it—character, setting, and plot, used either symbolically or naturalistically; and even his language, whether inside or outside quotation marks, is highly stylized. His themes, moreover, are as untrammelled by space and time as his constructs. We cannot tell from his fiction what he thinks, or would like us to think, about the League of Nations, the World Court, or rearmament, literal or moral; science in the modern world or racial and religious discrimination; or, for that matter, the isolation of the artist in an industrial and commercial

society. The closest he comes to the timely is in his satirical treatment of amateur ethnologists in *Mockery Gap*, and this satire is not the heart of that novel. His themes are, rather, on the same level of generality and universality as the Ten Commandments: love and death as life's greatest goods (and the latter the greater); pessimistic determinism (passivity is the wise answer to the imbalance between good and evil that is in the nature of things); and *philosophical* naturalism (ironically dramatized, as in *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, by the supernatural)—these are his most pervasive themes. And, finally, his symbolism—and this fact more than any other probably accounts for his comparative neglect by the high-brows—has its roots not in France but in England. He is almost exclusively in the great native tradition of allegory, fable, humors, "characters," and caricature that runs from *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer through *Everyman*, Jonson, seventeenth-century "characters," Bunyan, Addison, Fielding, Goldsmith, and Jane Austen down to Dickens. And, incidentally, his language is largely (though by no means exclusively, for he has no one style but several) in the popular tradition of English prose—close to the folk speech of the countryside, simple and direct, yet capable of subtlety—the language of the Elizabethan pamphleteers and of the Authorized Version and Bunyan, rather than of polite letters or intellectual discourse.

Most of Powys' characters are quite beyond the pale of realism and naturalism. To mention only a few instances, most of the good characters—Henry Turnbull (*Mr. Tasker's Gods*), Mark Andrews (*Mark Only*), Fred and Polly Wimple (*Innocent Birds*), and Joseph Bridle (*Unclay*)—are simply idiots; and the villains—Mr. Tasker and his father, Farmer Mew ("The Left Leg"), Charlie Tulk (*Mark Only*), Mr. Bugby (*Innocent Birds*), and Farmer Mere (*Unclay*)—are unbelievable monsters. The good characters are innocents dominated by two principles, love and passivity. Though full of kindness and incapable of evil, they are infamously used by the villains and rewarded only by death, "God's best gift"; and they neither know how nor wish to resist evil. The villains are personifications of what are, for Powys, the four cardinal sins—greed,

which entails the other three; anger; pride, which has first place because last to leave the sinful; and cruelty, the most potent of all. Inherent in these is lust, and hypocrisy sometimes masks (but intensifies) them.

Many of both the good and the evil characters, particularly in the early works, express or symbolize their virtues or vices in one or a pair of humors, interests which give not only pleasure but meaning and direction to existence and which sum up all there is to say about their characters. Mr. Tasker, for instance, has his pigs; Mrs. Crossley (*Black Bryony*), computations; Mrs. Dominy ("Hester Dominy"), rats and false teeth; the Reverend Robert Herrick ("In Dull Devonshire"), cider; Mr. Thursby ("The White Weathercock"), manners, stocks, and shares; Mr. Beggwell (*Mark Only*), mangel-wurzels; Mr. Hayhoe (*Unclay*), Jane Austen's novels; and John Chew ("God"), a hat.

Powys emphasizes the symbolic function of many of these "humorous" interests by identifying or associating them with religion. For the character, they objectify and symbolize his temperament or his plight; for the reader, abstract qualities. Mr. Tasker's pigs are his gods ("He killed his gods himself, and with great unction he would have crucified them if he could have bled them better that way and so have obtained a larger price"); Mrs. Crossley's "figures had become a kind of religion in her life, a religion that set her mind at rest and gave her peace"; the Reverend Mr. Herrick named his three cider barrels "in all reverence and love after the three persons of the Holy Trinity"; Mr. Thursby worships stocks and shares; Mr. Beggwell's prize mangel-wurzel is his god (old Mr. Tolly, like a priest in "the service of Amen Ra," hoes round it ritualistically once a week); for Mr. Hayhoe, Jane Austen's novels have all the attributes that most clergymen ascribe to the Bible; and John Chew finds that his father's hat is God.

Some characters, moreover, systematically or momentarily, instead of or in addition to symbolizing virtues or vices, symbolize Biblical figures or saints. Mr. Tasker's father, Old Jar ("The Left Leg," *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, "The Only Penitent," *Unclay*, and "The Two Thieves"), Mr. Weston, and



Farmer Spenke (*Kindness in a Corner*) symbolize God; the fisherman and the monkey in *Mockery Gap*, Old Jar, Farmer Mew, Fred Pim, and Farmer Spenke's daughters—Jesus Christ; Alice (*Mr. Tasker's Gods*), Mary Gillet ("The Left Leg"), and Mrs. Pim—the Virgin Mary; Deborah Crocker (*Innocent Birds*)—Moses; Mr. Solly (*Innocent Birds*)—Joshua; Michael (*Mr. Weston's Good Wine*)—the archangel Michael; the drover in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*—Joseph, the husband of Mary; Mr. Bugby and the Pedlar ("The Two Thieves")—Satan; and Luke Bird—St. Francis of Assisi. In *Unclay* and "The Two Thieves," death itself is a character. And, in *Fables*, as most of the titles indicate (for example, "The Seaweed and the Cuckoo-Clock"), not only people (however unnaturalistic) but also animals, vegetables, minerals, artifacts, and sensations are characters.

Unlike the characters of the other Georgians, these characters have little complexity; they are usually characterized, for once and for all, and by their moral rather than their physical qualities, upon their first appearance; and they rarely develop. They are flat or two-dimensional; they have no life beyond that entailed by their vices or virtues, by their humors, or by the (often ironical) relation that they bear to the Biblical figures or saints for whom they stand. We recognize most of them for what they are as soon as we meet them. The action does not reveal their nature; it illustrates it. Instead of the gradual unfolding of character that the naturalistic novel has taught us to expect—and, indeed, to demand—we are given little portraits. Sometimes these portraits pin down a dominant trait with a metaphor or a simile ("The vicar of Shelton, the Rev. Mr. Turnbull . . . was well clad in the righteous armour of a thick and scaly conscience that told him that everything he did was right"—*Mr. Tasker's Gods*) or with a miniature allegory ("Mrs. Vosper lived very high in the excitement of life. She lived upon the mountain called Lust. And there she fed happily upon the act of the beast, that is likewise . . . the act of God"—*Mr. Weston's Good Wine*) amplified, perhaps, by a generalization ("But Mrs. Vosper hated her own sex, and she wished to do two things with them—to bring them

into trouble, and to amuse herself by watching their undoing" and "Dr. George [Turnbull] was a man of habit. What he did one year he did the next. Only in his savings did he desire to see a change; he desired that side of events to show a progressive balance, and it was to that balance that the grand trunk line of his thoughts ran"); sometimes with the generalization alone ("Mr. Moody was a man of few words, but he had two interests in his life—the ladies and the letters"—*Innocent Birds*). Occasionally a character is introduced by a portrait of a class of men (that is, by a "character" in the seventeenth-century, Theophrastian sense) under which he is subsumed (James Dawe, in *Unclay*, for example). Often these portraits are assisted by allegoric names: Miss Frances Ogle (*Mockery Gap*), who ogles; Farmer Barfoot (*Innocent Birds*), who has a club foot; Mr. Bigland (*Mr. Tasker's Gods*), a wealthy farmer; Mrs. Topple (*Mockery Gap*), who has a bad leg; Mr. and Mrs. Turtle (*Kindness in a Corner*), who keep symbolic doves; and Nancy Pillow ("The Gong"), "who knew a thing or two of the act of love"—or, more subtly, by what Austin Warren (*Theory of Literature*) calls "onomatopoeic toning": Mr. Tasker—"taskmaster," "tasks"; Minnie Cuddy, an amorous widow ("The Left Leg")—"cuddle"; Mr. Bugby—"bugaboo," "bugbear," "bug"; Miss Pettifer (*Innocent Birds*, *Fables, et al.*)—"petty," "pettifogger"; Mr. Tulk—"hulking," "sulk"; and Mr. Dottery ("Adder's Brood," "The Lost Proofs," *et al.*)—"doddering," "dotty." Some of the characters are characterized, neither by portraits nor by labels, but by tricks of speech (Mrs. Dominy seldom opens her mouth without speaking of rats or "springs" [false teeth], nor Mrs. Dine without speaking of one of her "'ouses") or by a significant mannerism or action (Fred Pim rarely appears without tossing his cap, nor Mr. Dady, in *Unclay*, without squashing flies with his thumb). And most of the characters, once they are placed by a portrait, a label, or a mannerism, are placed for good; there is no development. What they are at the beginning—innocents or villains—they are at the end; their essences never change.

There are, however, two important exceptions to some of these generalizations. In two of the early novels, *Black Bryony*

and *Mark Only*, Powys essays with some success the creation of complex characters, many-sided characters who, moreover, are delineated—not in a block, by a portrait or a gesture—but gradually and through their actions. Second, the symbolical identity of those characters who stand for Biblical figures or saints—Mr. Weston is the most distinguished example—is seldom revealed at a stroke, though their moral natures—another dimension of their total significance—usually is; it is rather—and this is the source of the greatest esthetic pleasure—revealed gradually and with the subtlest kind of art.

Powys' characters, even the most complex of them, are, as William Empson has remarked, "firmly artificial and kept at a great distance from the author" (*Some Versions of Pastoral*) and, I may add, from the reader. *Mr. Tasker's Gods* excepted, where Henry Neville and, to a lesser extent, Henry Turnbull are *raisonneurs*, Powys' characters are not his spokesmen; and for this reason, and because of their simplification, distortion, and consequent lack of verisimilitude, the reader does not, and cannot, project himself into them. Unlike real people and the creations of the naturalist, they are interesting not as individuals but as symbols. Judged by realistic and naturalistic standards, they are failures. The innocents are improbable idiots, and the villains unbelievable monsters—but only if we lift them out of their stories and novels and set them down in Dorset or Bloomsbury; in the imaginative world of Powys' fiction, which has its own standards of normality, each has his place, ordained by the exigencies of theme. They take on interest and meaning only when viewed as part of the total pattern that is the story or the novel. Though they are related to life, they are not slices of life; the relation is indirect, through theme. Their coherence is internal, not external; they are consistent, not with life, but with one another and with the total pattern. These characters—as Eliot says of Jonson's (and the comparison is instructive)—"conform to the logic of the emotion of their world. They are not fancy, because they have a logic of their own; and this logic illuminates the actual world, because it gives us a new point of view from which to inspect it" ("Ben Jonson," *Selected Essays* 1917-1932).

Collectively, Powys' characters and his settings, like Faulkner's, constitute a mythical world. At least fifty of his characters, major and minor, appear, or are alluded to, in two or more stories or novels. Fewer than fifty mythical villages or towns suffice for the settings of the one-hundred and forty-two published works of fiction, and fewer than a dozen do service for perhaps three quarters of these works. Old Jar has a prominent role in "The Left Leg," *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, *Unclay*, and "The Two Thieves"; Luke Bird, in "Abraham Men," *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, *Unclay*, "Ducky," and "Feed My Swine"; and Mr. Truggin, in *Kindness in a Corner* and a half dozen short stories. Mr. Told, Mad Tom Button, Mr. Potten, Mr. Mew, Miss Pettifer, and Lord Bullman, and the Soper, Squibb, Billy, Pring, Spenke, and Huddie families, have minor roles, or are alluded to, in from two to nine or more works. And the villages and the towns of Penny Morey and Halfpenny Morey, Dodder, Dodderdown, Little Dodder, and Folly Down; Madder, Maid's Madder, Maidenbridge, and Stonebridge; Norbury, Portstown, Shelton, Tadnol[1], and Weyminster—bearing family resemblances in their names as well as in their topography and in the manners and mores of their inhabitants, and linked with one another by such agencies as Mr. Balliboy, the Norbury carrier, and by occasional migrations—turn up again and again.

But this mythical world has a symbolic (and a linguistic) rather than a strictly literal unity—a moral rather than, for example, a geographical consistency—; and this unity, far from detracting from the artistic unity of individual works, makes that unity more evident. For one thing, the biographies of some of the characters—and again Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County is an instructive analogue—are not self-consistent. Mrs. Moggs and Mrs. Fancy are good instances. In her first appearance, in "Mr. Facey," Mrs. Moggs was the shopkeeper of Norbury, "who would . . . be always sure to ring her bells, the grey curls that hung beside her head, when she peeped out between her window flowers"; in "The White Weathercock," either she or her namesake had a husband alive, was residing in Mumford, and had, it seems, given up shopkeeping; in *Mockery Gap*, she was keeping shop again, and shaking "her

bells, the two curls that hung on either side of her head," but in Mockery Gap, where she drowned herself; and, in *Unclay*, resurrected and keeping shop, this time in Dodder, she "moved a window-flower so that she could have a better view of what was happening." In Mrs. Fancy's first—and most memorable—appearance, in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, she was a mean, avaricious, childless Portstown widow whose chief pleasure, like Mrs. Vosper's, was young girls' undoing; in "The Badger Hunter," she or her namesake was an amiable old widow who died in Dodderdown after a life-long residence there; and, in *Unclay*, dead but for many years a resident of Dodder, she is reported to have once driven her boy mad by shutting him up in a dark cupboard with a rat while she went to the inn. The geography of Powys' world, moreover, is vague. Most of the villages and towns seem to cluster within a circle of a few miles' radius with Norbury, perhaps, at its center (for Mr. Potten, the Norbury undertaker, and Mr. Balliboy, the Norbury carrier, seem to have everyone's custom); Maidenbridge is usually the market town; and Portstown, Weyminster, and Mockery Gap are always on the seacoast, with Norbury inland and Wainfleet between it and Portstown. But we are given no map, nor do we need one; for exact locations are rarely, if ever, important. None of the works, finally, are in a strict sense sequels. Though *Innocent Birds* begins as one to "The Left Leg," it nowhere mentions, or presupposes the reader's knowledge of, that novella; and so with "A Stubborn Tree," which is a kind of sequel to "The Two Horns." In short, Powys' fiction is in no sense a continuous, consistent, literal collective history or survey of his world. Though each work illuminates every other work in the way that *King Lear* illuminated *Antony and Cleopatra*, each work is an artistic unity in itself; or—if, as is sometimes the case (in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, for example), it is not—the fault is internal and not the world's. The reader's previous acquaintance with a given character or setting can heighten his pleasure in, or provide him a clue to the interpretation of, a work that renews that acquaintance; but such previous acquaintance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of his interpretation of that work, and sometimes, indeed (in the case of Mrs. Fancy, for instance), it can be downright misleading.

Such literal unity as Powys' world has—and, as we have seen, it has considerable—results from its technical and thematic unity, and not vice versa. The real unity is a unity of attitudes and ideas, and of tone, symbolic devices, and language.

The real-world analogue of Powys' mythical world, if it has any at all, is coextensive with that of Hardy's: Dorset, especially the coast between Weymouth and Wareham, and the villages and the countryside more than the towns. But Powys' settings, like his characters, function as symbol rather than as verisimilar detail. The Powysian countryside in its purely objective aspects is that of Dorset, and its countrymen speak the dialect of that county; but the settings function artistically only as part of the total symbolic pattern of each work. The place names, for example, often have that allegoric quality (Mockery, Mockery Gap, Giddy Green, Folly Down, the Dragon Inn) or that onomatopoeic toning (Dodder, Dodderdown, Little Dodder, Tadnol) that we have noticed in the names of some of the characters.<sup>1</sup>

'If we take "setting" to denote everything natural and artificial except the characters and their actions, then Powys' settings serve a richer and subtler symbolic function than that served by the naming of places. See my "Water and Animal Symbolism in T. F. Powys," forthcoming in *English Studies*.

Powys' plots, like his characters and his settings, exist in a world far removed from that of strict cause and effect operating in accordance with psychological and sociological laws. It is an allegorical world in which the interactions of symbolic characters in symbolic settings figure a meaning: theme, rather than scientific law, is its master. The allegory—while in, and drawing much of its force from, the native English tradition—is yet different from the typical product of that tradition; and the difference is not simply of the sort that might result from (say) providing Christian with a Ford or Everyman with a television receiver. It is a modification in method as well as a substitution of matter, and it is in the creation of this "twisted" allegory—in William Hunter's fine phrase (*The Novels and Stories of T. F. Powys*)—that Powys' great originality lies. In the uses to which he puts this allegory is a subtle art that an

account of his simplified, typical characters would not lead us to look for. Powys is, as H. E. Bates puts it, "the John Bunyan of our time—though a Bunyan with disturbing gifts of irony . . ." (*Fortnightly Review*, N.S. CXXXII [1932], 541).

Powys' allegory is of two kinds. In both, there is a symbolic surface populated with concretes—people, animals, vegetables, minerals, artifacts—; and in both, the interactions of these concretes are a key to a meaning—a theme, a "significacio"—; and, in both, there is a subsurface populated with things that bear a one-to-one correspondence to the concretes on the symbolic surface and whose interactions correspond to the interactions of the concretes. In one, however, the concretes on the surface correspond to abstractions—virtues and vices, and such things as love and death—on the subsurface; while in the other, they correspond to other concretes.

And these two kinds of allegory may be, and usually are, mixed in various ways. On the symbolic surface of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, for instance, some of the concretes—notably the light and the dark wines—correspond to abstractions on the subsurface—love and death—; while others—Mr. Weston himself, for example—correspond to other concretes—God, in his case.

There is, moreover, a difference in the ways in which these two kinds of allegory figure themes. In the first kind, the abstractions on the subsurface are the real subjects of fictional discourse: *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* is a novel about love and death. In the second, however, the concretes on the subsurface are not the real subject: *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* is not a novel about God. Mr. Weston is the hero of his novel. He is in every way indispensable, and the two kinds of allegory are mixed there; but the subject of this novel is not God or any other concretes on the subsurface. Nor can we suppose that Powys wrote *Innocent Birds*—where Aunt Deborah, Madder Hill, God's gift, Solly, and *A History of America* correspond to Moses, Mount Sinai, the deliverance of the Israelites, Joshua, and the Books of Moses, respectively—to retell Old Testament myth, any more than Joyce wrote *Ulysses* to retell Homeric, or Eliot *The Waste Land* to retell the grail legend or to dis-



place Miss Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. In the first kind of allegory, the concretes on the subsurface are (to use I. A. Richards' terminology) the vehicle, and the abstractions on the subsurface the tenor (Mr. Weston's wines, for example, are metaphors for love and death). In the second kind, the relationships between the concretes on the surface and those on the subsurface are various and complex. Typically, the concretes on the surface are the tenor, and the concretes on the subsurface the vehicle; there is, moreover, a kind of ironical tension between tenor and vehicle; and, finally, the allegory is so mixed with the first kind as to make the mixture three-dimensional. In *Innocent Birds*, for example, Deborah and Solly, in respect of Moses and Joshua, are the tenor, and Moses and Joshua the vehicles; and the comparison draws its force as much from differences as similarities. But, in another dimension, Deborah and Solly are not the tenor but the vehicle; in that dimension, Deborah is a personification of goodness, and Solly of modesty. Similarly, God's gift, a concrete on the surface, turns out to be death; and death as the greatest salvation, rather than the deliverance of the Israelites, is one of the themes of *Innocent Birds*. God (or nature) promises a great gift on both the surface and the subsurface, and Deborah and Solly are His agents or interpreters on the surface as Moses and Joshua are on the subsurface. But how different the two surfaces are in other respects. Deborah is no stern lawgiver; Solly, no relentless warrior. On the contrary, both are unassuming, impractical, and endearingly unsententious; and both, though in one sense unworldly, are more concerned with the things of this world than with God (or—better, perhaps—more with Powys' god, who is nature, than with Moses'). This tension between the surface and the subsurface has the effect both of universalizing the specific events in the novel (that is, of giving a third dimension to the allegory, of establishing a synecdochic relationship between these events as vehicle and other events outside the novel as tenor, of making death the greatest gift, not only for Fred Pim and Polly Wimple, but for all mankind) and of understating the themes.



Powys' second kind of allegory, in its richness and complexity, does indeed deserve the epithet "twisted." But this account of it may suggest that the first kind, where concretes on the surface correspond to abstractions on the subsurface, the kind that sometimes gives a third dimension to the second kind, is (in the words of Coleridge's definition) "but a translation of abstract notions into a picture language . . ." (*The Statesman's Manual*, where he contrasts "allegory" and "symbol"), an arbitrary and confusing (though elaborate and perhaps ornamental) way of saying something that could just as well—in fact better—be said in literal language, a cipher without the justification of secrecy. Such, however, is not the case. Indeed, a concrete, like Coleridge's symbol, is usually

characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the special . . . . It . . . partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative.

Farmer Mew, in "The Left Leg," for instance, is a concrete corresponding to an abstraction, avarice; but, far from being an arbitrarily chosen symbol of avarice, he "partakes of the reality which" he "renders intelligible"; he represents avarice in the only way that we do (or can) experience that quality: he embodies it, he enacts it. To say that a man is avaricious is to say that he behaves in certain specified ways; and Farmer Mew is a perfect symbol of this quality because he behaves in these ways, and in these ways only. The relation between the symbol and the thing symbolized is surely the fittest one possible: synecdochic—that between the class member and the class, between the individual and the special; such a symbol is surely an instance of the "translucence of the special in the individual." Mew possesses all of Madder—the fields, the sheep, the houses, the flowers, the birds; the Squibb family and Mary Gillet; everything, in fact, except Old Jar, who is God. Whenever he appears, he is either in the act of or contemplating possession. Here he is possessing the Squibbs:

Farmer Mew opened his bag and gave to each adult member of the family a sum of money. When he had done so

he said: "You are now mine—mine. You belong to me as my flocks and my herds belong to me, as the fields of Madder belong. I have bought you with money; you are mine."

And here he is contemplating possession of Mary Gillet:

Farmer Mew lifted Mary upon Jar's stone and knelt beside her. He felt her with his hands as though she were a young heifer that he had bought in the market.

This feeling gave Mary her consciousness again; she wept and begged, she even struggled. Farmer Mew examined his new property again, this time more carefully. When she tried to raise herself, he hit her with his fist so that she might remain in her place. The man was quite at his ease; he carefully made ready his new purchase. He had, in order to gain full ownership, to possess this one as a man possesses a woman.

Mary helped him herself.

She again became unconscious.

The relation between symbol and thing symbolized in this first kind of allegory is not, of course, always synecdochic. That between Mr. Weston's light and dark wines, on the one hand, and, on the other, love and death, for example, is metaphorical. But these symbols, like Farmer Mew, though (to be sure) for another reason, are not arbitrary. They are validated by the overall allegorical plan of the novel; and, granted Powys' attitudes towards, and beliefs about, love and death, they are naturally fitting metaphors.

Allegory of this first kind is the staple of Powys' fiction (as it is, indeed, of fiction generally); the second kind, where concrete corresponds to concrete, occurs only in fits and flashes in the early fiction and is used systematically—and then, of course, usually in a three-dimensional mixture with the first kind—only in *Innocent Birds*, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, and *Unclay*. *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, for example, in one place allegorizes the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus into Egypt and, in another, the misadventures of the Gadarene swine; *Mockery Gap*, the resurrection of Christ; "The Left Leg," the birth of Christ, the Second Coming, and some of the doings of God; "Abraham Men," St. Francis of Assisi's preaching to the birds and the

temptation of Christ; *Kindness in a Corner*, the atonement of Christ; and "The Two Thieves," the struggle between God and Satan. This casual, unsystematic use of allegory of the second kind is much like the use that such tropes as metaphor and simile are usually put to: it provides local enrichment of the meaning. Here allegory is a *moderately* extended metaphor. Eliot makes this use of this kind of allegory in (for example) Part II ("A Game of Chess") of *The Waste Land*, where he allegorizes Cleopatra on her barge.

Powys, like Eliot in the passage just cited or Joyce in *Ulysses*, sometimes allegorizes other works of literature, in part or in whole (in fact his allegorizing of Bible stories might well be considered an instance of this). Sometimes the allegory is systematic—in "The Shut Door," for example, which allegorizes the second Wakefield *Pastores*, which, in turn, is a parody of the story of the birth of Christ; sometimes incidental—in *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, for example, where the gardener's wife "was surrounded, almost eaten into, by three or four children . . ." as Sin was by the Hell-hounds in *Paradise Lost*.

*Fables*, a collection of nineteen apologues or beast fables and Powys' favorite among his books, deserves special mention as something of a special case. In these stories, as I remarked earlier, animals, vegetables, minerals, artifacts, and even sensations—all equipped with such distinctively human attributes as speech—as well as people are characters; and the doings of these motley characters figure themes by means of both kinds of allegory. In "Darkness and Nathaniel," for instance, one of the finest of these fables, the three main characters—Light, Darkness, and Nathaniel—figure the theme that man's true happiness lies, not in life and love, but in death. Light symbolizes the abstractions life and love, and Darkness the abstraction death; and Nathaniel symbolizes the concrete man or mankind.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## Impaled on a Horn: The Jazz Trumpeter as Tragic Hero

MAURICE CRANE

The type of protagonist with whom we can identify ourselves changes as society changes, and this is one reason why many literary critics have lamented the disappearance from popular romances of the martyred, high-principled artist, doing daily battle against organized Philistia, and the emergence in his place of another type of "lionized outcast," who does his battle in the prize ring or in the bull ring.

Much like the fictional artist, the fictional athlete is able to fight for absolutes and maintain his personal integrity manifestly, before huge audiences, and against good-sized temptation. And, in addition, he possesses for today's reader several advantages which the artist cannot enjoy. He is separated from the rest of men by a noble, Billy Budd-like innocence rather than the artist's enhanced awareness of life, beautiful and ugly. Unsophisticated and physically splendid, he can be angered and bewildered by the sophistication and softness of those who delight in his achievements, by the softness which waits to snare him as one of the concomitants of success in high society. He is an outsider moving into a higher stratum, but the reader recognizes him at once for a better man than the rotter his friends want to make of him.

His end can be nothing but tragic. His virtues are natural, of the earth, but the earth is a long way from the penthouse, and the penthouse awaits. His choice (or, rather, the author's choice) is to show us (a) the athlete dying young, tragic enough, but hardly as pitiful as (b) the athlete growing old, going downhill to the inevitable flophouse. In either case, the noble primitive, away from the ball park where he belongs, is doomed to (a) push out his last breath (95% alcohol, by count) from

an (in)expensively upholstered bed, clutched by an (in)expensively upholstered female, or to (b) return to the scene of the triumphs of earlier, more innocent days, there to die doing an obvious good while thousands cheer.

From the antithetical types of the artist, wiser and more sensitive than the society that crushes him, and the pure, naive athlete, made punchy by contact with effete and parasitic admirers, there has developed a synthesis, half-artist-half-athlete, unlike anything in life, but persistently reappearing in popular fiction and theatre. He is the fabled jazz trumpeter, an untrained genius, blowing woodnotes wild, inarticulate except with his horn, ruined by soft living or by attempting some hopelessly impossible feat.

Blowing a note that's not on the horn is the artistic equivalent of hitting a new high-jump record. It is an obvious kind of achievement, an immediate proof of virility, of wind, of endurance, of "heart." It is an absolute goal, apparent to the audience, an artistic and physical and moral achievement. And, like the display of wit, or punching prowess, or folding money, it can happen at almost any time. Scenes from two popular motion pictures illustrate this. In *From Here to Eternity*, Prew, having vowed not to fight, becomes established with his audience as a he-man for the first time (i.e., he convinces them that when the fight comes he will win it) by picking up someone else's bugle in a bar and ad-libbing a hot chorus to the accompaniment of the juke-box. The movie-goer realizes without analyzing his reasons that a man who blows that kind of horn will have no trouble in any manly encounter. Similarly, in *Blues in the Night*, one of the principal characters unpacks a trumpet recently retrieved from the pawn-shop, blasts out a chorus while Jimmy Lunceford's twenty-piece band falls into perfect background support, and wins immediate acceptance by his hearers both on and off the screen as a worthy person.

Actually, the tragic hero of *Blues in the Night* (just as the hero of the novel *Wild Faun*) is a pianist. But the pianist, in actual fact the backbone of any jazz group, is usually by-passed

in fiction because his instrument isn't portable, because his achievement on it is not an athletic (visibly dramatic) achievement, and because the piano is not traditionally a he-man's instrument. Jelly-Roll Morton told of his fascination with the piano as a youth, but of his fear of playing it because it was recognized as the instrument of women and feminine men.

But the trumpet is brassy, military, heroic, male. The reader who can see himself shooting a water-buffalo can hear himself hitting C above high C. The drummer, the other contender for hero-dom because of his easy identifiability, comes off in fiction as a Mickey Rooney of a man, an acrobat or tumbler rather than a boxer or bullfighter. The virtuosity of the drummer has no clear goal, but everyone can see what the fictional young man with a horn is doing: he's aiming for a knockout.

Like the athlete, the fictional trumpeter must choose between the Scylla of age and the loss of his powers and the Charybdis of an early death. His career means performing for and mingling with people who admire him only while he is at top form, and do not understand nor want to understand the *mystique* that drives him or the Absolute Good at which he aims. But in the now familiar fictional pattern, they introduce him to new luxuries and he comes to need (and willingly embrace) the kind of life which contains the seeds of his destruction. Like the artist and athlete before him, he takes to the bottle or to unsatisfactory love affairs because he cannot explain himself to anyone and because he fears losing his natural talent at the one thing he loves. The only safe way to go is backwards, but the door is locked behind him.

When Hollywood decided to give Dorothy Baker's *Young Man with a Horn* a happy ending, it opened the back door. It provided the trumpeter-hero with a gingham-and-geranium home-type who was, of all things, a seasoned troupier from show business, to save him from the *femme fatale*, a medical student at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. Nor did movie audiences, among them presumably many members of the A.M.A., find this contrast objectionable. It

was taken for what it was meant to be: a simple reassertion of the pattern of the good in-group versus the bad outside world; there's no place like home. This is identical with the solution of the love-triangle in *Body and Soul*, where the quiet neighborhood girl wins back the regenerated welterweight from the alluring society charmer. It is the Damon Runyan pattern, so frequently repeated on TV, of the boxer who tosses over the Duchess in favor of his manager's niece. The novel *Young Man with a Horn* followed a tragic but no less predictable pattern. The trumpeter, like the bullfighter in Barnaby Conrad's *Matador*, for instance, realizes the evil of his lover and the class of society that has paid him and made him famous and now threatens to let him drop. And like the hero of *Matador*, he collaborates with the Grim Reaper to subvert her. But happy or sad, the trumpeter's end is an athlete's end.

In the jazz trumpeter the reader finds an artist-athlete with whom he can safely identify, whose adventures he can enjoy vicariously, knowing that according to literary folklore the perils are occupational perils, and do not threaten his own life. For no intelligent man would willingly embark on a career knowing that both love and business would be foredoomed by the inevitable twin spectres of aging and inability to explain the unexplainable.

And, as a matter of fact, no such doom awaits the non-fictional jazzman, as is perfectly obvious. The many bright, clean-living youngsters leaving the conservatory for the jazz recording date today face personal futures more Brubeckean than Beiderbeckean. And no matter where one stands aesthetically on jazz music, sociologically this is a happy fact. However, we needn't expect this fact to put an end to that popular, multi-level tragic hero, the artist-athlete-trumpeter. The writers know a good thing when they see one.

## II

There is a confounding paradox in all of this. The trumpeter himself cannot explain what makes him go, but the writer must. The hero's doom would be obviated by the safety valve

of verbalization; but he has no safety valve, and so he bursts. For his collapse to be tragic, however, *somebody must find words* to express the extent of his talent. "Jazz musicians don't pop off a lot," says the narrator of "Sparrow's Last Jump" (*Harper's*, May, 1947). "Like when you ask them about jazz; they don't trust words to say what they feel, so they just dummy up." So far is verbalization beyond the capacity of the title character of this story, he becomes uneasy listening to people trying to describe his talent. He can not talk, and he will not be party to any discussion of the nature of that greatness which makes him worth writing about in the first place.

One reason why the fictional musician's achievement must resemble that of the fictional athlete is that the author is forced to show the quality of musical performance through its immediate effect on other characters in his narrative. Any omniscience on the writer's part or any venture into the specialized jargon of aesthetics might kill off the flow of the story. So he depends on the three types of characters who make critical judgments: jazz competitors, outsiders, and jazz allies. The first and third of these groups are capable judges; the second group, whether the individuals be friendly or unfriendly, doesn't really know much more than the reader. But capable or incapable, it is near impossible to describe their reactions in any thing but spectator-sport terms.

In the temporal arts, as everywhere else, there is competition, and it's extremely meaningful to those involved. However, describing it as anything but a sparring match is a difficult business. Clellon Holmes pulls it off successfully in "The Horn" (*Discovery* #2), the story of a "cutting session" between the champion tenor saxophonist and a challenger, but a great deal is lost on the reader not already familiar with the world of jazz. The contest between the classical and jazz pianists in Harold Sinclair's *Music Out of Dixie* degenerates into a test of memory and ability to imitate. But when the competition is between trumpeters, as it was in the Climax! TV drama "Magic Horn," the battle is decided, not in terms of creativity and jazz conception as with the saxophonists, not in terms of imitative



talent as with the pianists, but in the simple matter of getting any sound at all out of a particular horn. Blowing a magic horn and thereby becoming king of dixieland trumpeters becomes the rough equivalent of lifting a magic rock and winning the hand of the beautiful princess. No one much cares what you do with the rock once you have it lifted.

The inability to communicate with outsiders has already been discussed. A sympathetic outsider is sometimes a handy device for telling the story, but he has his serious limitations. An aristocratic white music-lover is the outsider who tells the story of Duff Conway, a Mississippi Negro waif who learns to play magnificent trumpet in reform school and who rises to small but for him undreamed-of glory only to meet his downfall in a *Carmen*-like affair with a fancy woman. He kills the woman's flashy gambler friend and as the story opens we see him awaiting his electrocution. Shelby Foote has wisely kept his aristocrat-narrator from even trying to explain what made Duff Conway tick. Instead he shows the trumpeter's relationship with his horn by having him ask not for a woman or a steak dinner for his last night on earth, but for the horn. The author leaves his Boston aristocrat inarticulate and shows us instead the horn, wailing through the night from the death house.

More common by far than the friendly outsider is the insensitive and crude person whom every jazzman who works for a living must perforce run into. This is the outsider who doesn't want to understand. Writes Bill Coss of *Metronome*:

Imagine that you are perceptive enough, and the jazz musician has brilliant flashes of intuition, if not actual perception, to see that excitement—sensual excitement—is what you are selling . . . that your employer has absolutely no regard for you . . . that you are a creative artist who is being forced into the position of a common entertainer; an artist who has something to say with no one to whom he can speak. Then you take a friendly drink with a friend or an unfriendly drink by yourself, and then another and another. And if you do this often enough you will have really complicated your life. And with . . . heroin . . . alcohol . . . girls . . ., you will violently settle down to self-destruction.

Mr. Coss is an any-door knocker of the "understand is to forgive" school, and we'd be willing to accept what he says were there any indication that sympathizers could get much closer to the tragic trumpeter than enemies.

They don't. Even musician allies can't break through the barrier. Evan Hunter's hot lips and heroin novel, *Second Ending*, shows Bud, the college-boy tenor man, listening to his old sidekick Andy blow the trumpet.

It was a peculiar sound to listen to, a lonely sound somehow, and yet a sound that demanded empathy, a sound you wanted to help, a sound that forced you to identify with it, as if Andy's struggle were your own struggle . . . Bud . . . wished he could get up there with him and help him push the notes through the horn, help him battle his way out of the maze and climb up above the obfuscating clouds to where everything was very clean and very blue . . . But you couldn't get there. You fought with it and you willed it, but it was always out of your grasp, you were chained to earth . . .

Bud goes back to reading John Milton, unable to describe this talent of Andy's which at once attracts and repels him—unable even to think of it in anything but symbolic terms. We can expect considerably less sophisticated musicians to be even more frustrated, even more mystical. And so it is with the title character in "Little Nooley's Blues" (*American Mercury*, March 1951). He is a trumpeter of some renown who finds himself mysteriously unable to play his horn until he has returned to the grave of his trombonist friend and blown a funeral blues. He does and his powers just as mysteriously return to him. It wasn't a matter of playing badly until he did homage to the dead; he could not play at all. His lips, his wind deserted him. His inability is on the physical, the lowest, level.

The other side of the coin is the plot of the TV drama "Magic Horn." A great jazzman has died and left his horn to an untrained and slightly feeble-minded bandboy (played by Sal Mineo at his feeble-minded best), who inherits, along with the trumpet, all the technique and creative imagination of its former owner. On pure inspiration, unmitigated by pre-

viously demonstrated talent or by practice, the boy becomes a leader of men, his two lungs with the strength of ten because his heart is pure. He becomes the driving force of the band, scoring this touchdown, hitting this homer, making this knockout as a tribute to the great teammate who once wore the same number. And lest any viewer think for a moment that the boy's artistic achievement is due to anything more complicated than pure adrenalin, a rival shows up to challenge the lad. He scoffs at the "magic" idea, picks up the horn, puts it to his lips, huffs, puffs, and walks away a beaten man. Nary a sound issues from the magic horn. The techniques and training which have stood by him through the years desert him. In this uncomplicated way we solve the problem of who is the better trumpet player. And it's just as well for the old-timer. There's not much sense competing with a talent so strong that it can manifest itself beyond the grave.

### III

Such are the problems of fiction. Recognizing that a great deal of art is undramatic, that much real achievement is on an even line, without noticeable highs and lows, that the majority of jazz performances are cooperative, not competitive ventures, the novelist has to be selective. He must point to exciting incidents and hint at a huge background of quality performance. He creates characters out of air; he cannot say go listen to such and such a recording and you'll see what I mean. How he must envy at times the reporters and biographers, who can write a concert as a concert and a horserace as a horserace.

If only it were that simple! Unfortunately nature copies art, and the fictional jazz trumpeter has become so easily accepted and understood on physical terms that we superimpose his character and peculiarly athletic talents on flesh and blood trumpeters. In his autobiography, *Really The Blues*, Mezz Mezzrow describes Louis Armstrong's kindness and humor many times. But he describes his talent only once. And for the one description of the playing of the man whose combination of

phrasing and tone is the most easily recognized in the world, Mezzrow gives us a caricature of the kind of dramatic situation we have just been discussing.

It is New Year's Eve in Baltimore, and Louis is playing a stage show. His lip is so sore he must keep pricking it with a needle and treating it with salve. The audience is unaware of his great pain, but in true theatrical tradition every last chorus girl and stagehand knows and suffers along with him. As the crowd screams wildly for more, not knowing the "terrific drama going on before their eyes," Louis, "all the lament and heartache of . . . the colored man's life . . . throbbing out through that horn," glides slowly up to high F above high C. "Each time it sounded like he wasn't going to get up there. This time for sure he would fall, and break, and collapse with the strain. We heard the torture vibrating behind each soaring note." The trombone player can take it no longer; he runs off the stage sobbing. The whole band has misty eyes. "Then it happened. Louis began that torturous climb up to high F, the notes all agonized and strangled, each one dripping blood . . . He was fighting and sweating blood all the way . . . And then, with the last breath of life left in him, like a man in death convulsions, heaving with his heart and soul and lacerated guts for the last time, Louis clutched and crawled and made that high F on his hands and knees, just barely made it, at the last nerve-slashing second."

The problem: how to communicate the genius of a jazz trumpeter without bogging down in aesthetics. The answer: turn Louis Armstrong into Richard Halliburton. They're buying mountain-climbing books this season.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# critique studies in modern fiction

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# JAMES GOULD COZZENS

BY LOVE POSSESSED • 1957

*(available in the regular edition \$5.00)*

GUARD OF HONOR • 1948

Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

*(available in the regular edition \$4.75)*

THE JUST AND THE UNJUST • 1942

*(available in the Harbrace Edition \$2.25)*

ASK ME TOMORROW • 1940

*(available in the Harbrace Edition \$2.25)*

MEN AND BRETHREN • 1936

*(reissue Spring 1958 in the regular edition \$4.00)*

THE LAST ADAM • 1933

*(available in the Harvest Edition \$1.25)*

S. S. SAN PEDRO • 1931



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## Cozzens and the Conservatives

JOHN LYDENBERG

Most of the reviewers' encomiums of *By Love Possessed* were accompanied by solemn headshakes at the critics' neglect of Cozzens. This is nothing new. In the late thirties and early forties some reviews of his novels spoke of him as neglected, and many reviews of *Guard of Honor* made much of the point. Then in 1949, from his Editor's Easy Chair, Bernard De Voto made one of his characteristically uncomfortable, slashing attacks on the professors and intellectuals, who had ignored Cozzens, apparently out of sheer spite because he was a really good writer and a professional rather than a "literary" man.

As usual there was some sense underneath the De Voto rhetoric; it is quite true that the guild of professional critics had passed Cozzens by because he refused to write the kind of novel they were in the habit of noticing. If their reasons were not laudable, they were understandable. Yet there was another group, more or less outsiders like Cozzens himself, who might have been expected to recognize his virtues and adopt him as a favorite son. These were the conservatives—unorganized and heterogeneous, but increasingly vociferous after the end of World War II. It may be illuminating to consider why they might have welcomed Cozzens, and to speculate on why they failed to do so.

After a brief blaze of youthful romanticism and a few murky experiments in symbolism, Cozzens settled into a safely conservative groove. From *The Last Adam* in 1933, through *Men and Brethren* (1938), *Ask Me Tomorrow* (1940), *The Just and the Unjust* (1942), and *Guard of Honor* (1948), he wrote consistently in a manner that ignored where it did not openly flout the liberal lines followed by most of his fellow novelists. Not that he was a political or social novelist in any ordinary sense of the world. Writing about people rather than problems, ethics rather than ideas, he never wore his social views on his sleeve. The very fact that he was no polemicist, no one's fellow-traveler, should have made him all the more attractive to the conservatives in their harried search for a literary representative. The approved Cozzens character has always been

one who "assumes that duty comes before pleasure, self-sacrifice before self-indulgence. Believing that the test of life is accomplishment rather than enjoyment, he takes pride in doing a good job in the station to which he has been called." That quotation is not from Cozzens; it is a brief excerpt from Clinton Rossiter's description of the conservative, the whole of which sounds as though he had been using Cozzens for his basic source material.

This is no place to describe the varieties of conservative apologetics. Although the new conservatives are as bitterly split among themselves as radical splinter groups, they agree in general on some points. All tend to go back to eighteenth century, pre-romantic thinkers like Burke or John Adams, whom they admire for their "realism." They are pessimistic about human nature and stress the natural inequalities of men. Society is an organism, in their view, and when healthy, mirrors the natural human inequalities. Continuity and stability can best be maintained by popular self-restraint and acceptance of the leadership of an established, cultured aristocracy. Society should encourage diversity rather than uniformity; prefer liberty to equality. Basic to the very existence of a good society is a reverence for the higher law as revealed in the history of the race or the nation and as decreed by God.

To the Conservatives the liberal tradition, with its stress on equality, its love of change, its belief in progress, and its general optimism, is shallow and subversive. Liberals are utopians and intolerant zealots who in striving to legislate equality have become government fetishists and either stand on the crumbling brink of the red pit or have already fallen in.

The neo-conservatives who concern themselves with literature believe, not without some justice, that the liberals and their brother radicals have dominated American literature during this century. For over a decade now they have been pleading with novelists to reform, conservatively. We have had too much decadence and denunciation, they say, too many *Tobacco Roads*, *Grapes of Wrath*, and *Naked and Deads*, too much nihilism and crypto-communism. Novelists have been irresponsibles, slavishly following outmoded literary traditions and the scarlet liberal line. They should instead turn responsible, accentuate the positive virtues, tell the happy truth about our good society and look lovingly on democracy. In answer to their loud prayers, they got Herman Wouk and they loved him.



## II

But long before the mutiny on the Caine, Cozzens had been writing in a distinctly conservative vein. In 1938, he had made the protagonist of *Men and Brethren*, the Reverend Ernest Cudlipp, give sober advice to an equally earnest but much less wise young curate who was flirting with radicals.

"Your friends downtown aren't getting anywhere, Wilber. They're sentimentalists. They don't believe in the doctrine of original sin. Realists are the only people who get things done. A realist does the best he can with things as they are. Don't waste your time trying to change things so you can do something. Do something, do your Christian duty, and in time you may hope things will change."

Ernest Cudlipp recalled that he had himself once been "passionately, priggishly, broad-minded and liberal." But now that he was a man he had put away childish things, and readily explained away his curate's "revolutionary friends" as suffering from inferiority complexes.

Similarly, in *The Just and the Unjust*, Abner Coates, the still-callow protagonist, is chided by his mentor for criticizing the way the local Republican boss manages to maintain stability and continuity.

"Standing off and saying you don't like the way things are run is kid stuff—any kid can work out a program of more ice cream and less school and free movies and him telling people what to do instead of people always telling him—. . . If things were run according to your ideas instead of the way they are run it would be much better. Who says so? Why you say so! That's what the dopes, the Communists and so on, all the boys who never grew up, say."

A major part of the education into maturity in this book is Abner's realization that he must accept the cloudy morality of the political boss, and do the best he can with things as they are. That is wisdom.

In *Guard of Honor* much of the action revolves around a political and social issue: specifically, the way in which Negro officers should be treated at a Florida air-force base during World War II; by extension, the whole question of segregation and Negro rights. The liberals and the reformers, those who seek actively to

enforce their principle of racial equality, are shown as rather unpleasant people; Colonel Ross, the wisest, fairest and most effective officer on the base finds these self-appointed do-gooders an unmitigated nuisance, to put it mildly. Though the good Colonel understands the plight of the Negro, he does not let his Northern sympathies interfere with his realistic insistence that the best interests of all are served by going very very slowly. Cozzens is not "for" segregation, here. He is not for or against anything, ostensibly; he is just writing about people. But the fact remains that liberals will take umbrage at the picture Cozzens draws, conservatives comfort.

Possibly more significant than his presentation of the race problem is his attitude toward the military. Cozzens breaks one of our dearest literary traditions by showing not only respect but actual liking for high-ranking officers. Instead of being revealed as proto-fascist brass, the colonels and generals appear as human beings, fallible like others, but somewhat better in that they have developed the judgment and the self-control needed for their responsible positions. They are hard-pressed, imperfect worthies doing their best in a difficult world made up of people much less worthy, on the whole, than they.

More important than particular expressions of conservatism are Cozzens' underlying attitudes and assumptions. Cozzens is a mature painter of mature people. Youth he finds brash and foolish at best, often downright stupid and dangerous; the generous emotions that lead them to enthusiasm lead also to a disturbance of the precarious balance that sober reason alone can impose upon the whirl of social and human relations. His preference of the adult over the adolescent is but one form of his preference for the established, the traditional, the well-tryed. His choice of lawyers as protagonists in his last three novels (Colonel Ross was a judge in civilian life) signifies: law is the upholder of the social order, the conservator of established values.

"Progress" is a word scarcely to be found in his vocabulary. He writes largely about the old Protestant middle-class and obviously prefers the small town with its traditions and its hierarchy to the anomic city. He is as unconcerned with capitalistic material progress as he is sceptical about reforms; he neither approves nor disapproves the new business men, who are significantly absent from his stories. Social change—the essential dynamism of

American society and one of the central themes of American literature—is seldom more than a vague, troubling background to his stories. Without showing a Marquand-like nostalgia for the old days, he evinces an obvious dislike of the new. This is most apparent in his treatment of the new, mobile men, especially representatives of minorities like the Jews, the Irish, and the Negroes. Essentially, he simply finds them distasteful when they threaten to move into unwonted positions. He always presents them with impeccable fairness, with a great show of understanding, with explanations for their rude, crude pushing. But for all his insistence on explaining how they got that way, he makes his new men show up poorly beside the old.

One of the troublesome things about Cozzens—and this may be one of the tests of his greatness—is the discomfort with which one makes generalizations like those I have just made. His material has a subtlety, complexity, and density such that it provides an answer, or demands a qualification, to any bald simplifications. I could give the arguments to counter my own points. But they would be pettifogging; the basic point holds.

What we are concerned with here is something that emerges from the depths of Cozzens' personality and that provides the substratum for his fictional world. At that basic, ill-discerned level there can be little doubt about the general truth of his conservatism. In his insistence on reason in this age of unreason, he is a throw-back to the eighteenth century. In his belief in aristocracy in our mass democracy, he also belongs to that century, but to the conservative, "realistic" wing of eighteenth century thought that rejected the revolutionary or Jeffersonian ardors. Like John Adams and his other New England forebears, Cozzens believes that the aristocracy of virtue and talents is most often found among the aristocrats of birth and wealth. He deals in personal and moral not social and political terms. But his ethics is an ethics of responsibility, responsibility to the well-tested, traditional virtues of a rational, moral society.

### III

Why then is Cozzens a conservative prophet without renown among his fellows? For one thing Cozzens is not a prophet at all. He lacks the sense of mission that Rossiter considers characteristic of the new conservatives and that we certainly see in Rossiter and

Viereck at one pole and in the Kirk-Buckley-Chamberlain *National Review* group at the other. But the mere fact that Cozzens aspires to no leadership, seeks to found no cult or start no new movement, should not be a reason for conservatives failing to exploit him. Though he remained personally aloof and presumably could not have been cajoled into polemical activities, he was nevertheless writing novels that affirmed the conservative virtues and revealed the sense of responsibility that the so-called irresponsibles were scorning.

There is one conservative canon that Cozzens distinctly rejects: his respect for the conservative virtues does not rest on the rock of religion. His anti-Catholicism in *By Love Possessed* comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with the earlier novels, except for its ferocity. Though it is aimed primarily at the Catholic Church, it hits tangentially at religion in general by attacking the very idea of authority as an abdication of man's free intelligence. Cozzens seems to respect a moderate Episcopalianism, to approve some religious practices as useful, and to recognize that religious belief satisfies the need of some people. But his respect is cool and disquieting to any true believer, for in the last analysis he obviously considers religion not as something on which to build but as a form of retreat, an escapist and unreasonable way of facing the everyday problems of this world.

Another foundation for today's conservatism is the sentimental complacency and conformity, or the complacent sentimentality, that is best—or at least most slickly—represented by Herman Wouk. This cult of respectability has been the most durable aspect of American conservatism and has dominated American middle-class society and given form to a large part of our literature and sub-literature. The novel of domestic sentimentalism has put on make-up today, but the more it changes the more it remains the same trickle of bittersweet tears, the same worship of the trinity of children, church, and Sunday chicken, the same assurance that the best families have the best Sunday dinners and the other families are to be graded accordingly as they strive genteelly to emulate the table setting and manners of the right people.

Cozzens likes his old families all right, and much prefers them to imitative nouveaux or the slovenly masses who haven't even the sense to imitate. But his are the old old families, whose sense of

proprieties is instinctive. Their respectability need not be conspicuous; they would conserve basic values instead of exploiting sentiment as a symbol of status. The sentimentality that accompanies the middle-class respectability has always been one of Cozzens' *bêtes-noire*. In *By Love Possessed*, one of his favorite characters refers to it as "the spirit of the age" and to this age as the "century of the gulp, the lump in the throat, the good cry." It is in this cloying form that we are served much of our conservatism today.

So we approach the real answer to our now patently rhetorical question. Most conservatives today would not recognize Cozzens' brand of conservatism. Some of the most vociferous of them shade, as Kirk and Buckley do, into the reactionary obscurantism of Cohn and McCarthy, so blatantly unconservative that they were scourged from the temple as "populist radicals" by Viereck, and certainly were beneath contempt to the aristocratic Cozzens. The more numerous and equally strident group of "practical" conservatives, the Chamber-of-Commerce Babbitts, have generally lacked any intellectual spokesmen, and would scarcely have heard of Cozzens. Most of the calls for a healthy, patriotic, uncontaminated, non-liberal literature have come from critics on the fringes of these groups. Actually, most American conservatives are not now, and never have been, "good" conservatives in the Rossiterian meaning of the word—which is what gives to the more intellectually respectable of the new conservatives their quaint, sad effect of voices in the desert crying in vain. Indeed the "good" conservatives, when they have emerged from their old houses, have looked more like good liberals: as witness F.D.R. or, more notably, Adlai Stevenson.

*Time* the omniscient describes Cozzens as a "rock-solid Republican." It would be only a very old Republican rock that he could rest comfortably on. The pieties of Eisenhower Republicanism must sicken him almost as much as the tale of My Dog Checkers. A few conservatives should have recognized Cozzens long ago as their man. But most of them would not and could not. Their failure to do so is a measure of the quality of their conservatism.

HOBART & WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

## James Gould Cozzens: Humanist

FREDERICK BRACHER

In the eight novels which he now lists as his important works, James Gould Cozzens has steadily ignored the vagaries of literary fashion. His persistent refusal to be swayed by the changing intellectual fads and dogmas of his time may explain both the literary limbo to which he has been relegated by critical neglect and the consistent excellence which makes him one of our major novelists. Standing a little aside from his times, he has persisted, like Edwin Arlington Robinson, in cultivating his own private variety of excellence, with a lack of critical appreciation which would be difficult to believe except that literary history provides so many similar instances of it.

In the thirties, when the most admired writers were concerned with the economic problems of the underprivileged and when Dos Passos and Farrell were establishing a norm of socially conscious literature, Cozzens was writing five novels which differed widely among themselves but had in common a bland ignoring of social significance, as the term was then interpreted. *SS. San Pedro* (1931) is a lean, rapid, mildly symbolic narrative of shipwreck and disaster. *The Last Adam* (1933) draws a sympathetic picture of an anti-social, atavistic physician in a New England small town. *Castaway* (1934) is pure fantasy, a Freudian horror story. *Men and Brethren* (1936), a study of an Episcopal clergyman, poked fun at the "optimistic clap-trap" with which Marxist sympathizers oversimplified the facts of American history and society, and concerned itself with moral and theological problems at a time when religion was a most unpopular subject for serious writing. *Ask Me Tomorrow* (1940), an "unpleasant" comedy of manners, centers on the misadventures of a young writer, oversensitive and self-conscious, among the wealthy idlers of the Riviera.

In the early forties, with World War II still in its uncertain stages, the New Critics riding high, and novelists either turning back nostalgically to the simplifications of the class struggle or cultivating a mystique of decadence and fine writing, Cozzens produced *The Just and the Unjust*, a low-keyed, realistic study of

unspectacular, responsible citizens grappling with an ancient problem: the disparity between Law and justice, between abstract principles and the tangled jungle of human behavior. After the war, disregarding the conventional story of physical anguish and psychic strain on the battlefields of Europe or the South Pacific, Cozzens produced *Guard of Honor*, a book which has frequently been called the best of the war novels, but one in which the war itself is only thunder on the far horizon, barely impinging on the consciousness of uprooted men caught in the machinery of a training airbase in Florida.

Now, in 1957, when insecurity and anxiety have turned many writers to a search for divine Grace or to the desperate and egocentric involvements of Existentialism, Cozzens has published *By Love Possessed*, a long novel which soberly examines the moral problems of a settled, traditional society relatively untouched by the external anxieties of our age, and which is explicitly hostile to the recent fashionable retreat into Roman Catholicism. At a time when sex, through exploitation and over-advertisement, has been degraded to a level of banality which makes it hardly more significant than the satisfactions offered by a Coca Cola, Cozzens has set himself to analyze in subtle detail the profound ramifications in society of possession by love.

This seemingly deliberate avoidance of literary fashion is not merely perverse; it is a reflection of a sturdy, stubborn integrity working from a consistent, though limited, set of values. Cozzens is a humanist and classicist, open-eyed, lucid, and reasonable. For him, the proper study is the condition of man, "the real nature of the human will." What he may lack in poetic rearing and plunging, he more than makes up for by sober, ironic perceptiveness and depth of analysis. In a period when wisdom has been sacrificed to knowledge and deep feeling has become identified with neurotic abnormality, Cozzens follows the injunction of Solomon: get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.

Wisdom, though better than fine gold, is apt to seem a little chilly to the young and ardent; it takes a mature mind to appreciate the judicial detachment which is the characteristic mark of the Cozzens heroes, and presumably also of their creator. This detachment leads Cozzens to two extremes of emphasis—perhaps not so much faults as limitations, the defects of his virtues. On the one

hand he does less than justice to the immature; he ignores the virtues of youth—energy, enthusiasm, idealism, joy. An eye which keeps too strict a watch on man's mortality will almost certainly miss what John Cheever has called the harsh surface beauty of life; and Cozzens' feeling for the still, sad music of humanity, while it gives his novels unusual depth, limits the range of feeling they express to the chastened and subdued. Furthermore, Cozzens peoples his novels with young men who seem definitely second-rate, not even potentially as good as his seasoned heroes. Such characters as the sour, indecisive young writer in *Ask Me Tomorrow*, the brutal hot pilot and the surly reformer from *Guard of Honor*, the pathetically flabby Ralph Detweiler in *By Love Possessed* suggest that the author has stacked the cards against youth.

On the other hand, Cozzens does more than justice to his mature heroes. They are paragons of almost superhuman competence and virtue, and they illustrate Cozzens' theory, stated explicitly in two of the novels, that quantitative differences in ability are so enormous as almost to constitute a difference in kind. By implication, Cozzens deplores the liberal, egalitarian refusal to admit and act on such differences; and his sensitivity to the range of human abilities may explain what several critics have referred to as Cozzens' snobbery—his failure, in the early novels at least, to do justice to the less able members of society, and his preoccupation with the more competent.

Cozzens characteristically writes, with approval and understanding, of the educated professional and executive class. These solid, responsible citizens—the natural prey of social satirists on the alert for hypocrisy or pomposity—struggle to live morally and rationally in a world where care, mistrust, and treason wait on them; and they manage to perform the difficult task of keeping society running. It is a considerable achievement to write seriously about such people and to make them interesting. They lack the color of Hemingway's expatriates, Steinbeck's paisanos, or Faulkner's poor whites, and vice is traditionally more attractive than virtue. But beneath an exotic surface, the Cannery Row bums, the admirable prostitutes, the members of the Snopes clan are apt to be dull and paltry persons. Cozzens' characters are interesting because of what they think and what they are: the judgments they make, the values they manifest. They are not, one might say, interesting



in themselves; they are interesting only as seen, analyzed, and presented with shrewd understanding by the author. They are written about, rather than existent in their own right, but they come alive with extraordinary vitality.

Cozzens writes as though there were such a thing as The Novel, a genre with limitations and rules and its own characteristic excellence. His concern for form and craftsmanship reflects an allegiance to Henry James rather than to the subsequent experimenters who have reduced the word *novel* to an almost meaningless label. Apparently stimulated by limitation, he follows an approximate set of dramatic unities which have a good deal in common with those attributed to Aristotle. Characteristically, his novels cover a short period of carefully plotted time, usually a weekend or its equivalent, into which he crowds a large number of crucial incidents. Unity of place is approximated by setting each novel in a highly particularized locale—a New England small town, a few blocks in New York City, an airbase in Florida. Cozzens keeps a sharp focus on a small field, abjuring the vast misty prospects of the romantics and the large and often sterile panoramas of the proletarian realists. The “dramatic” quality implied by these limitations is heightened by unity of action: the novels may, like *Guard of Honor*, include an enormous number of persons and events, but the unity of their complex interrelations is always clear and perspicuous. The melodramatic incidents—madness, suicide, abortion, adultery, death—with which the novels typically end are not merely sensational: they reflect Cozzens’ feeling that plot is the heart of a novel and that a tragic incident is the heart of plot.

To make such events seem probable, the characters must be presented fully and in the round. Cozzens is extraordinarily successful in creating convincing characters, but his particular gift is for subtle, extended interpretation. There may be several pages of analysis and clarification between two remarks in a conversation—as when Arthur Winner, slightly embarrassed by Mrs. Pratt’s fulsome frankness, runs over in his mind before answering her his low-keyed “feelings of mildly exasperated entanglement, of faint distaste, of half-baffled incredulity, of vague consternation.” The analysis occupies almost four pages and ranges from a doubt that he may have underestimated his opponent, to a consideration of her creed’s “emotional murk of mysteries and dramas,” to a long meditation on the solace that the Catholic church offers its converts

(including freedom from guilt when the flesh rebels), to a realization of Mrs. Pratt's unconscious pleasure in having aroused, with the best intentions of course, sensuous imaginings in her auditor, to a final description of the dismay with which he realizes that Mrs. Pratt is leading around to a discussion of his own sexual experiences. No summary can do justice to the subtlety of the analysis or the articulate richness of its expression. This constant sense of the author's intelligence brooding over his characters, this full intellectual grasp of his material, is Cozzens' outstanding excellence. As Dr. Johnson said of Burke, "His stream of mind is perpetual."

Cozzens' style, like his concept of the novel, is also unfashionable. It is complex and ornate without being poetic. The surface is dense and in the later novels often forbidding, but it is clear in the sense that the poetry of Pope is clear—the meaning not always easy to grasp on a first reading, but fully articulated and expressed if a reader makes the effort required by the compression and complication of the structure. The prose of Faulkner, on the other hand, even when the structure is relatively simple, is suggestive rather than explicit; and it is ambiguous in the sense that, like poetry, it manages to express what cannot really be said. Cozzens seems to know, and to be able to say, exactly what he wants to express; but his statement is often slowed down by nests of interrupting qualifications within parenthetical clauses. Especially in the later books, the inner subordination may so confuse the structure that a sentence becomes a Chinese puzzle. Usually, however, the complicated structure contributes to a style which is rich, sonorous, and masculine—a pleasant surprise in a day when the concept of unembellished functionalism has been so unconsciously accepted that Renaissance splendor comes as a shock to the average American. Passages like the following reward those who still cultivate the vanishing art of full reading.

[Colonel Minton] passed, the upright wreck of a man, moving as though mechanically drawn, making his noon beeline for the Union League bar. Arrived there, his foot planted on the brass rail, he would stand stoically waiting, while Alfred Revere with deference prepared the only medicine that now could mend him—the drink poured out, placed ready in front of Colonel Minton, for the stroke of the hour that signaled the trembling hand to raise the glass, that set Colonel Minton free to down a short convulsive swallow—the first today! . . .

*How dies the wise man?* said the far-from-jesting Preacher—and stayed him for his answer. *As the fool!* Like Alfred Revere's, Howard Minton's other helpers failed, his comforts fled. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day! Colonel Minton was well along in his particular form of that ruination to which, for which, men were born . . . . With order (those pressed old trousers; those polished old shoes!), with control (from the body of the morning's death, delivery waited on high noon), Howard Minton had devised himself a way of life. The careful budgeting of his pension money, never a penny wasted on nonessentials; the studied arranging of his affairs (his simple prescription was to eliminate in the interests of drinking all other business or activities) made possible the spending of most of Colonel Minton's waking hours in *I am's* grateful numb bemusement . . . .

Unwilling to, unable not to, Arthur Winner let the dismaying picture occupy his mind a moment. Dismay was reasonable. Only an occasional man, an always-potential alcoholic, might find imposed on him terms for the ending of his days that circumstances imposed on Howard Minton; yet Howard remained *exempli gratia*, a proposition illustrated in an instance. What man, you were asked to ask, ever ended his days on his own terms, free to the end, at liberty mentally and physically, competent in mind and body, to choose his course of greatest good? As he grew weary, as he grew weak, opportunities to choose departed from him (he could elect to do only what he was able to do). Of the fewer and fewer choices left, more and more (it seemed safe to guess) would be made between what he wanted to do very little, and what he wanted to do even less. With a vain wish that things were ordered otherwise, with a discomfort of increased compunction (not uncolored by self-concern) for the human predicament, Arthur Winner turned in at the service drive.<sup>1</sup>

The Ciceronian complexity of sentence structure is enriched by allusions and literary echoes: quotations from Shakespeare, the Bible, and almost the entire range of the English poets are worked unobtrusively into the text and contribute, along with the frequent use of uncommon, "literary" words and an excess of alliteration, to the over-all effect of slightly old-fashioned magniloquence. Cozzens admires Macaulay, and he justifies his own style, by implication at least, when Arthur Winner contemplates the florid Victorian inscription in the lobby of the Union League Club:

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the novels of James Gould Cozzens appear by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, publishers.

That epigraph embodied a seriousness of purpose still respectable. Were people really the better for not talking like that any more? Was there any actual advantage of honesty when high-sounding terms went out? Had facts of life as life is lived been given any more practical recognition?

The implied rejection of the bare, plain style recommended by Bishop Sprat for use by the Royal Society in the seventeenth century is paralleled by Cozzens' evident sympathy for nineteenth century architecture, and perhaps is related to his interest in architecture in general. The priest in *Men and Brethren* remarks that "Architecture and music are the only real arts anyway. The rest are just excuses for not earning an honest living." Throughout the novels, buildings are lovingly and minutely described, and Cozzens' long sentences are architectural in their concern for fine materials (the rich, right word) and their baroque embellishment covering but not concealing a sturdy basic structure.

This ornate, rhetorical style is often used to heighten the force of a colloquialism, and the contrast can be extraordinarily effective in puncturing a balloon—as in the following passage, describing the Catholic church's facility in dealing with the weakness of the flesh:

But among the forewarned, forearmed faithful, such escapes were no occasion for panic, nor even for agitation. The strays were the devil's—bad; they worked evil; they spread confusion among pious or sacred thoughts and intentions; but what would you? Evil's energies must flag too; and when they flagged, means to recapture and recommit the unclean spirits had been appointed. Grace, failing to confine, still enabled contrition; mercy saved the contrite—just keep your shirt on! Meanwhile, nature must take nature's course.

A controlled, habitual use of incongruity suggests an ironic turn of mind, and Cozzens' irony pervades the novels. It exists not only in the speech of his admirable characters, like Colonel Ross in *Guard of Honor* and Julius Penrose in *By Love Possessed*, but in the author's comments on his characters and their behavior. Deeper than mere verbal discrepancy or incongruity, it reflects a persistent awareness of the contradictions of human experience and a humility, like Keats' negative capability, which is willing to rest in paradox or inconclusiveness.

In this sense, Cozzens' ironic habit of mind serves to introduce

what might be called his philosophy: a complex of attitudes and values which, in metaphysics and epistemology, approach Pyrrhonism and in ethics can be approximately indicated by the term stoic. The ratiocinative habit, which his critics have all commented on, is directed not to the justifying of belief but to an analysis of possibilities, to a minute study of the kind of people his characters are. It would be too much to say that for Cozzens "Whatever is, is right," but like the Augustan writers to whom he so often alludes, he works naturally "within the limits of the possible," and his novels are moral in the eighteenth-century sense of providing a mirror and model of conduct.

Sceptical and urbane as any gentleman Deist, Cozzens yet reveals a characteristic complex of prejudices or biases, which, being all on the side of conservative common sense and right reason, run counter to most of the forms of romanticism fashionable in our day. Being true to one's self (that perennial idol of the romantic temperament) usually means the rationalizing of self-indulgence, and in the Cozzens novels it invariably leads to disaster. The romantic exalts the arbitrary decision, the releasing act which, even though it be rationally indefensible, commits one finally to a course of action. The purpose of decision, in this sense, is not to achieve some foreseeable good or avoid some impending evil, but merely to establish the existence or identity of the individual. *Decido, ergo sum*. Decisions of this desperate sort imply hostility between the redeemable individual and the hopeless decadence of society in an indifferent universe. Hence, the justifying act need not be prudent or wise or altruistic; its value is contained in its affirmation of the individual ego.

Cozzens insists on the importance of judgment—the making of responsible choices after a realistic examination of the facts and a rational estimate of results to oneself and others. His characters demonstrate a conviction that man can get along in the world by making reasoned judgments and carrying them into action. "Getting along" does not mean, of course, living happily ever after. It means securing some good things, avoiding some troubles and disasters, and supporting the inevitable with stoic dignity and composure. Conversely, the unadmirable men of the novels are those who make wrong (that is, personally prejudiced) decisions on the basis of "facts systematically misunderstood." These unhappy misfits make up an interesting gallery of incompetence: the weak,

the immature, the criminal, the stupid or feeble-minded, the obsessed. They include the sick and harried criminals of *The Just and the Unjust*; the fanatical compensating reformer in *Guard of Honor*; the young men too wrapped up in their immediate desires to see things clearly (a goodly number of these, from the young poet in *Men and Brethren* to the spoiled Ralph Detweiler); the slaves in one form or another of the amative appetite, running the whole gamut from Ralph's devoted and possessive sister Helen to the unhappy and alcoholic Marjorie Penrose, possessed by a Maenad and seeking punishment to allay the guilt its driving presence induces.

Against these variously motivated incompetents, Cozzens sets his heroes, mature men who carry the burden of responsibility, picking up after their weaker brethren, and who try to exercise right reason in the face of time, change, and decay. Cozzens is haunted by a sense of the universal flux, and his careful explicitness about time, typified in the epigraph to *By Love Possessed*, emphasizes the inevitability of change, the necessity of ripening which enables men to do what they must do, and the ultimate decay and dissolution which makes ripeness for action only a prelude to ripeness for death.

Looking with admiration at his wife, backing the station wagon in a swift, decisive arc on the gravel of the driveway, Arthur Winner feels a cold hand laid on his heart.

Those warnings of the morning had come back—Noah's craggy yet broken-down old face; the stertorous laugh of Willard Lowe's resignation; Alfred Revere's despairful calm; Colonel Minton's dazed, glazed eye. They were the successive notes, heavy tolled, of going, going, gone . . . They were the indirect but inescapable sad evidences of that truth, well known, well said: *Time shall rifle every youthful grace!*

This pervading sense of mortality and the steady ravages of time, apparent even in the earliest novels, is heightened by frequent examples of casual but ominous accidents. Life consists of changes and adjusting to them, and the earlier books mainly deal with men forcing themselves or being prodded into making crucial steps—General Beal recovering his authority, Abner Coates deciding to marry and run for District Attorney, Ernest Cudlipp demonstrating his acceptance of the condition of man. But no matter

how prudently and rationally he may live, man is always subject to violent changes coming from a Fate beyond his control—that is, from a chain of causes and effects outside his range of vision. Like Captain Hicks, surprised into an adultery which earlier he had explicitly rejected, Arthur Winner finds himself astoundingly committed to a course of deceit and crime, alike abhorrent to his honor and his reason, yet unavoidable. The unexpected blow of fate, moreover, is likely to come precisely at the moment of *hubris*, when a man is priding himself on his successful competence. George Detweiler is drowned just as he is getting the tangled affairs of the bank straightened out. The Ponemah oak, over three hundred years old and a constant symbol of vitality and permanence to members of the Club, is struck and blasted by lightning as unexpectedly as Arthur Winner is to be jolted out of his well-ordered virtuousness by the revelation of Noah's dishonesty.

For this kind of wanton act of the gods, Cozzens' favorite symbol seems to be the thunderstorm. The bolt of Zeus, hurtling from the blue, appears in several of the novels (the death by lightning of Bonnie's father in *The Just and the Unjust* is as inexplicable as the drowning of George Detweiler), and a storm usually marks or introduces a crucial turn of events. In *The Last Adam* it is a winter rainstorm, precipitating an unseasonable thaw and a typhoid epidemic. More often it is summer lightning, as ominously suggestive of disaster as the off-stage thunder in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Ernest Cudlipp's problems come to a head in a thunderstorm: the Rector forces him to violate his principles, the arrival of the renegade monk confirms the Rector's decision, and Lulu Merrick, the albatross of guilt around Ernest's neck, turns up dripping, deranged, and moribund. In *Guard of Honor* the plane lands in flashes of lightning and rain, bearing the key figures of the tense, two-day drama: the fated (but still barely acquainted) lovers, the General whose temporary loss of command is indicated by his freezing on the controls when a collision seems imminent, the Negro whose plight symbolizes the racial injustice around which the subsequent action centers, and Colonel Ross, the still imperturbable man of responsibility whose hour has not yet come. Thunder and rain are a background to Arthur Winner's first compulsive, adulterous encounter with Marjorie Penrose in the summer house. Lightning rends the Ponemah oak at the moment

when Arthur Winner consummates the most satisfactory of the love episodes depicted in *By Love Possessed*, and the thunder is an ominous prelude to the suicide, twenty-four hours later, of Helen Detweiler, the act which makes inevitable Arthur Winner's final tragic recognition.

Man's helplessness in the face of such intimations of mortality is symbolized by the opossum frozen in the glare of headlights and crushed under Arthur Winner's car—an episode which is explicitly recalled when the Negro Alfred Revere hears his death sentence from the doctor. Cozzens' view of life is tragic: man, no matter how wise or courageous or prudent, is fated to unhappiness and destruction. But the corollary he draws from an acceptance of man's fate is the heroic stoicism of the Anglo-Saxons: Courage should be the stronger, the heart bolder, as our strength lessens. Like the Norse gods, who foresee their doom at Ragnarok but who are determined to go down fighting, a man should act as though destruction were not just around the corner, and shore what fragments he can against his ruin.

One of the best supports of the Cozzens hero is a sense of solidarity with his fellows and with the past. Established institutions and traditions are treated with respectful veneration: the Calumet Club, the Ponemah Association, the Union League Club (links with a past somewhat nostalgically recalled), and those more universal institutions, the Church and the Law. The church (Episcopal) is discussed from the inside in *Men and Brethren*, but even in the minds of such outsiders as Arthur Winner's father, the Man of Reason, it is regarded with respect as a pillar of permanence in a world of change and confusion. "The stuff of this myth had long been the sacred fiction of the Man of Reason's people, his race. A fable so venerated, around which their civilization, for century on century, had formed itself, had a vested right. Were such established uses of piety to be lightly scouted?" The answer is no, and Arthur Winner, though really less interested in theology than the frankly sceptical Julius, agrees to become Senior Warden of Christ Church.

For much the same reason, the Law—that organization of the secular myths of justice—is held up as a symbol of permanence and stability. Old Judge Coates, bedridden with a stroke, says, "I'm glad I spent my life in the law . . . There are disappointments;



there are things that seem stupid, or not right. But they don't matter much. It's the stronghold of what reason men ever get around to using." Around this stronghold, Cozzens builds two of his novels, and the hero of a third is in civilian life a judge. The judicial temperament—considering in tranquility the emotions of others and reducing them to reason and rule—is held up for admiration in every book. "That repose of law, that majestic calm of reason designed to curb all passions or enthusiasms of emotion, to put down all angers and hates of feeling," provides a sorely needed bit of solid rock to cling to in a flood of chance and change. It may turn out to be, finally, unavailing—even the Ponemah oak is finally blasted by the thunderbolt, as Judge Coates is stricken by apoplexy—but the Cozzens hero tries to preserve and conserve such points of relative stability: Arthur Winner does what he can to save the riven trunk of the tree which serves him as a tangible link with the past.

Clubs and established social institutions are not only links with a tradition continuing from the past; they also provide links with one's contemporaries. Some solace in the remorseless procession of change and vicissitude is afforded by the sense of brotherhood, of belonging to a group. It is only the rare, atavistic individual like Dr. Bull of *The Last Adam* who defies his fellows and stands alone in primitive surliness. Typically, the characters of a Cozzens novel are members of a small, tight, Eastern community, and they are sustained by their sense of belonging even when they are stunted or twisted by the limits which the group imposes. Outsiders—those not, by virtue of generations of residence, elect—are invariably regarded as pathetic or despicable. The immigrant factory workers, who may be expected to reduce Brocton and the whole Delaware Valley to the condition of a papal state; the tough boys from the next block in *Men and Brethren*; the urban criminals who make the mistake of committing their crime just across the county line and hence within the jurisdiction of the Childerstown court—all these aggravate their inherent unamiable qualities by being strangers, recent arrivals from outside the group. The typical picture of society in the Cozzens novels is the small isolated unit, cut off from, though seen against the background of, society at large.

Cozzens shares the Existentialist aim, summarized by Simone

de Beauvoir, of attempting to understand the abstract concretely. Working through particulars toward universals, he attacks the knotty problem of racial prejudice by means of a detailed study of race relations at a Florida airbase; and if he does not arrive at a neat, workable solution, he at least presents fully the facts upon which an ultimate solution must be based. The injustices suffered by colored people in this country are so glaringly obvious that the average well-intentioned person is apt to see the problem in stereotyped, over-simplified terms and usually goes on to a sentimentally exaggerated prejudice in favor of the oppressed race. Ideally, the proper attitude toward the Negro, or the Jew, would be to treat him, not with special (and therefore condescending) consideration, but as though he were no different from any one else, subject to criticism or an honest analysis of faults and virtues. When a novelist does this, however, he is almost certain to seem unsympathetic or worse, and Cozzens has been attacked for his supposedly reactionary attitude toward such major social problems as racial discrimination. Cozzens might answer that he writes of Negroes as he sees them: precisely because they have been discriminated against, they are often poorly qualified to fill responsible positions in society. The liberal stereotypes concerning the nobility of the persecuted do credit to the heart, but not necessarily to the head. Those who, like Julius Penrose, look unblinkingly at the facts may well be led to the conclusion that the generally applauded attitude of sympathetic special consideration is sheer sentimentality, if not offensive snobbery.

It would be unfair to attribute sentiments spoken by a fictional character in a particular situation to Cozzens himself, but it remains true that, although Cozzens understands the long history of mistreatment which has tended to make the Negro unsure, shiftless, or incompetent, he makes no attempt to soften a harsh picture of damaged self-respect and social inadequacy. In *S. S. San Pedro* the black gang, drunken and cowardly, desert their post and crowd into the first boat to get away from the foundering liner. Even Miro, the Brazilian mulatto whose love for *tela*, efficiency, makes him a relatively sympathetic character, has no more capacity for initiative or leadership than the bewildered Negro bomb group which is being tried out in *Guard of Honor*. And the shiftless colored servants in *The Just and the Unjust* and *Men and Brethren*

are given tolerant justice but no sympathy by the heroes of those books.

Perhaps the best that can be said in defense of Cozzens' hard-heartedness toward the down-trodden is that his attitude toward social problems is not at all reformist. He does not actually deny the possibility of long-term improvement; he simply ignores it, accepting the present fact of personal and social inequality and concentrating on an analysis of its results in people and situations. In this he may be flouting, deliberately, the reformist sentiment of our times, an age, according to Julius Penrose, of "capital F Feeling—a century of the gulp, the lump in the throat, the good cry." His attitude may be heartless, but it serves, nevertheless, as a corrective to the unthinking sentimentality of many Americans, self-appointed champions of the underdog, complacently anticipating the solution, overnight, of age-old social problems. It may be worth noting that Cozzens is equally unsparing in his depiction of incompetents of other sorts—the feeble-minded, the criminal, the youthful delinquents, the sentimentally religious, whom he equates with the moronic Caroline Dummer, happy in the infantile satisfactions and sterile security of the county jail. What Cozzens is pointing out is that all men, the just as well as the unjust, the shiftless servant as well as the responsible master, share perforce the human condition. Typhoid strikes indiscriminately the rich and the poor; the glaring headlights of Fate dazzle into stony helplessness both Negro and white man; and privileged and underprivileged are alike subject to possession by love.

Love is, in the Cozzens novels, the favorite nostrum and sometimes the effective solace of man caught on this darkling plain. The treatment of love, however, is so ironic and unsentimental that the tepid romances of the earlier novels have been cited as proof that Cozzens' head is too much in command of his heart to enable him to become a great novelist. It is true that Cozzens often treats romantic love as a mere incident in a well-ordered life: though Abner Coates "loves" Bonnie, he can hardly be said to have lost his head over her. His proposal and acceptance take place in the kitchen while Bonnie is preparing a bowl of milk toast for a sick child, and the episode is more comic than romantic. But the implication is clear that their married life, like that of Captain Hicks in *Guard of Honor*, will be happy precisely because neither

partner regards the world well lost for love. The Reverend Ernest Cudlipp, dedicated by inclination and conviction to celibacy, repels the advances of a beautiful and cultivated woman with cool reasonableness; and when she is exasperated into questioning whether he has any normal appetites, he replies that "appetites depend a good deal on what you spend your time thinking about." To the man or woman who feels instead of thinks, romantic love is apt to be disastrous. In *Men and Brethren*, Geraldine Binney, by temperament and training a good wife and mother, is made pregnant by an irresponsible young man because she knew, she felt, that it was all right for him to have her. Captain Hicks is betrayed by compassion into what must necessarily be an abortive affair with an unhappy WAC. Even Ernest Cudlipp must still patiently suffer the consequences of a thoughtless, youthful love affair, and his partner, Lulu Merrick, demonstrates in a terrifying fashion the truth of Ernest's conviction that anyone who "soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

But if Cozzens has consistently understated the value of romantic love, he more than makes up for it by his analysis of the endless complications caused in human life by the " manifold manifestings of the amative appetite." The first page of *By Love Possessed* calls attention to the ironic inscription on the clock: *Omnia vincit amor*; and the book is in one sense a comprehensive survey of the various ways in which men and women are conquered by, or possessed by, love.

There is, for example, the blind, indiscriminating itch of the immature male: Ralph Detweiler, defective in taste and initiative, takes the easiest way and gets into serious trouble with two push-overs. There is the conventional, self-generating, low-pressure romance, which accounts for Arthur Winner's first, unsuccessful marriage to Hope Tuttle and which is described as bringing about a convenient, sober union between the young rector and his earnest, modest "Midge." There is the tyranny of physical infatuation, exemplified by the unhappy Marjorie Penrose, driven to self-destructive excesses of passion and guilt. Even the controlled, rational Arthur Winner is conquered by the contagion of her "oestrua! rage" and is led to desecrate his wife's memory and deceive his best friend. There is, best of all, the true marriage of

true minds and bodies—the shared physical and spiritual union of Arthur Winner and Clarissa.

A secret, helpless, destructive love for suffering humanity manifests itself in the violent crudity of Dr. Reggie Shaw's demeanor and inexorably leads him, through the stages of hopelessness and disgust, to the brink of collapse. Parental love is analyzed at length. Fathers and mothers play an ultimately rigged game of chance: the nurture of children who, at the very best, grow up and transfer their affections, and at the worst turn into selfish and malicious strangers, like Warren Winner who, even in his arrogantly foolish act of self-destruction, manages to wound his father. Ralph Detweiler, selfishly unable to see beyond his own immediate satisfactions, ruins his pseudo-parent, the obsessed and self-sacrificing older sister who has spoiled him out of love and a mistaken sense of duty. Love of self results in the driving ambition of J. Jerome Brophy, the district attorney, determined to "show them" that he is more than the son of an Irish saloon keeper from the wrong side of the tracks. Old Noah Tuttle, whose embezzlement involves Arthur Winner in his tragic dilemma, was motivated by love of a long-cherished picture of himself as the wise advisor who would never let people down.

There is the overripe, self-centered emotionalism of Mrs. Pratt, whose mistaken notions about the love of God are ironically analyzed and whose murky religious feeling makes a sharp contrast with the true Christian devotion shown by the Reverend Ernest Cudlipp and his assistant, a broken-down missionary from Alaska. Finally, there is the open-eyed, unseeking love between friends, best exemplified in the final conversation between Arthur Winner and Julius Penrose—an episode which parallels in action and phrasing the scene "Within the Tent of Brutus" in Act IV of *Julius Caesar* and which demonstrates profoundly the maxim that a friend must bear a friend's infirmities.

Despite the variety and intensity of the emotions displayed, Cozzens' aseptic intelligence is always in control, surveying dispassionately, analyzing shrewdly, and pointing out an ironic moral: most kinds of love are destructive; the passions, uncontrolled, lead to unhappiness; and yet all men, at some times and in some ways, are possessed by love. Love, indeed, conquers all.

Perhaps the ultimate message of the book is contained in the

long, brilliant episode in the garden, when Mrs. Pratt, Eve-like in her innocent self-absorption, is put to flight by the appearance of a real snake, which brings down to the level of reality all her ecstatic imaginings, her "glad gushings of pure tenderness" over matters which were none of her business. For at her discomfiture Arthur Winner, despite his relief at being released from an embarrassing interview, becomes aware of "that same sympathy which . . . must regret all defeats of human hope—the sillier the hope, the sadder, in a sense, the dashing. The sadness was of the vain attempt, the sadness that turned irony's edge . . . . To taunt Mrs. Pratt with her weakness of a fear she was silly to feel, with her foolishness of posturing, with her little lapses of delectation in off-color musings or smutty imaginings, would be the bootless business of taunting her with her humanity. This same humanity, when worked-on feelings had sufficiently inflamed the willing spirit, when emotional excitement anesthetized the weak flesh, could meet, the report was, uttering joy, the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane."

A wise and clear-eyed acceptance of fallible humanity, implicit in all the novels, is paralleled by Cozzens' rueful resignation to the unsatisfactory state of things in general. Betrayed by the passions, men make mistakes and pay for them with guilt, misery, or death. Even those whose lives, relatively speaking, are controlled by reason, must recognize the potential, if not actually imminent, disasters which the blind Goddess may be preparing for them. Life, Colonel Ross reflects, seems "mostly a hard-luck story, very complicated, beginning nowhere and never ending, unclear in theme, and confusing in action . . . —the manifold pouring-past of the Gaderene swine, possessed at someone's whim, but demonstrably innocent . . . to the appointed steep place."

What shall a man do to be saved? Cozzens' answer is "the stoic's cheerless—but firm; but manful—word." Colonel Ross thinks, downheartedness being no man's part, that one must "stand up and do the best he can with what there is." Judge Coates says, "There'll be deaths and disappointments and failures. When they come, you meet them. Nobody promises you a good time or an easy time . . . But no bets are off." General Nichols says, "We must do it anyway." Julius Penrose, describing how he has painfully taught himself to hobble with canes, says, "In this life we cannot

do everything we might like to do, nor have for ourselves everything we might like to have. We must recognize what the law calls factual situations . . . . The becoming thing, in any given situation, is for a man to try what he can do, not just sprawl there whining."

The word "becoming" gives a clue to the justification for such humbly courageous behavior. Cozzens seems to have a strong feeling for the virtue which in the Renaissance was called "grace," a sense of what is fitting and seemly. Downheartedness, abject hopelessness, crawling and whining are unbecoming to a grown man. Cozzens has no use for any self-consciously lost generation, wallowing in sentimental and misanthropic immaturity. In describing a portrait of Abner Coates' grandfather, who had got a bullet through the hip at Chancellorsville, Cozzens comments: "In those days it was not the fashion to be embittered or disillusioned by such an experience, so what Linus Coates looked was simply grown-up, self-possessed, ready for responsibilities." It is true that hints of another justification for manly behavior can be found in Cozzens' books. Throughout the novels, a man's work is pictured as the real center of his life; and the faintly Calvinistic overtone of this stress on the virtuousness of carrying on one's vocation is made explicit in a crucial passage in *Men and Brethren*. The parable of the talents in the "terrible twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel" implies a moral duty to make whatever good use one can of the abilities with which he has been endowed; and the admirable men of Cozzens' novels prove themselves, in a moral sense, good stewards. But for the most part, Cozzens seems to regard the justification of courageous effort to be aesthetic: a man must live with himself, and despair, whining, and self-pity, ugly in themselves, are no man's part. Trying to do what can be done, facing the beast, is intrinsically admirable.

But if man assents, with what grace he can muster, to the factual situation, working only within the limits of the possible, what becomes of principle—of the ideal of justice, say, as distinguished from what one must actually do in order to be more just than unjust? How does one reconcile principle with the raw facts of life? The question comes to a head in Arthur Winner's dilemma: to continue his habitual, comfortable practice of honest open dealing, secure in "the peaceful aplomb of blamelessness," or to

live a burdensome, continuing lie in order to protect other people? Arthur Winner's choice is to assume the burden of compromise, to give up his good opinion of himself, to assent to "the second best, to the practical, the possible." If "freedom is the knowledge of necessity," the kinds of victory attainable in life may all be "forms of defeat," givings up, compromises. Even the law, that embodiment of reason and epitome of ideal principle, takes judicial notice of man's imperfection. Judge Coates explains that the jury system is like a cylinder head gasket: "Between two things that don't give any, you have to have something that does give a little, something to seal the law to the facts." The ironic epigraph to *The Just and the Unjust* quotes Lord Hardwicke, an eminent jurist of the early eighteenth century: "Certainty is the Mother of Repose; therefore the Law aims at Certainty." Arthur Winner interprets the quotation, putting the emphasis where, despite the capital letters, it truly belongs: "In its wisdom, the law only aimed at certainty, could not, did not, really hope to get there. This science, as inexact as medicine, must do its justice with the imprecision of wisdom, the pragmatism of a long, mighty experience. Those balances were to weigh, not what was just in general, but what might be just between these actual adversaries."

In all the Cozzens novels, the crucial judgments are based on a conviction that circumstances alter principles, on a kind of pragmatic philosophy of compromise. Characters with inflexible opinions on matters of principle, who "don't give any," are made to look foolish or to suffer unhappiness themselves and be a source of unhappiness to others. It is only the occasional lucky man, like Arthur Winner's father, who is able to reflect on his deathbed that he has never once been forced to compromise his principles; and since such good fortune is a matter of luck, it is no cause for pride. Pride has its uses: it does a good deal to make us fit for human company, according to Judge Coates. But a decent humility is more important, and the complacent defenders of pure principle usually appear to be flown with an unChristian arrogance. Conversely, the Reverend Ernest Cudlipp—with open eyes committing the serious sin of urging and abetting an abortion, in order to avoid the worse sin of permitting the deliberate, continued abuse of a husband's trust—adds to the burden of guilt which he is



humble enough to bear. The archetype of the Cozzens hero is Julius Penrose, crippled by one of the senseless blows of Fate, brought to the edge of ruin by the foolish pride of his senior partner, knowing and forgiving his wanton betrayal at the hands of his best friend, Arthur Winner, and yet setting about courageously and in all humility to pick up the pieces and do the best he can with what there is.

PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA

## The Breath of Chaos in THE JUST AND THE UNJUST

DAVID R. WEIMER

When on the first page of *The Just and the Unjust* we find the young hero facing a mirror, we can confidently predict that the novel will take up the question of appearance and of its traditional enemy, reality. And when we reach the next-to-last page, our prediction seems to have been borne out as the hero, Abner Coates, says to his father, "I'd like to do what was right. Who wouldn't? . . . It has something to do with how things look, what people think of me." Thus he links the problem of appearance-reality to the problem of right conduct, and it is appropriate that he should do so. For *The Just and the Unjust* is a novel of moral discovery, and to Abner falls the task of learning how to act in a world where appearances may deceive.

It is in front of his bedroom mirror that Abner begins that process of self-examination. There he rehearses his opening address to the jury that will sit at the forthcoming murder trial. This interest in the surface of his own behavior readily turns, in the Childerstown courtroom itself, to the visible features around him: he notes the emaciated physique of one of the defendants, then reflects on the apparent irrationalities of the criminals' behavior and on the discrepancy between anti-social acts and the moral platitudes with which these are usually dressed up. Abner, who is Assistant District Attorney in the small community of Childerstown, also concerns himself in and out of the courtroom with the conduct of Jesse Gearhart, the middle-aged local politician who seems to Abner soiled by the dirty work of practical politics. As he later admits, Abner has mistakenly read Jesse's character from the stereotype that he has accepted, rather than from the man himself. And he has yet to learn that his own character is something more than the way he looks to others. His initiation into this truth is begun when Jesse tells him, "You wouldn't worry so much about what people were thinking of you, if you'd just remember that most of the time they're not."

Even by the end of the novel, Abner cannot bring himself wholly to accept the accuracy of this judgment, to acknowledge that first impressions are not necessarily the most accurate ones and that he has erred in trusting them too much. But the changes of opinion that he undergoes in the course of the novel—about Jesse, for instance, or about the wisdom of tempering justice by the conditions under which it operates, as a succession of counselors from Earl Foulke to his father recommends—indicate that he is in fact turning away from appearance as a guide to conduct.

Partly by his treatment of other characters who evince a large interest in surfaces, James Gould Cozzens shows that he approves Abner's change of course. The jurors are described at the beginning of the trial as "busy affecting intelligent attention and easy dignity," although "not one of them . . . felt either." William Zollcoffer, the offensively presumptuous brother of the dead man, is a salesman of hair tonics and other aids to beauty. Similarly, the courtroom spectators are interested in the murder trial as a "show," as pantomime. The acoustics were bad, they could hear almost nothing, they knew neither defendants nor legal procedure, "but still they sat. They looked thirstily, drinking it in, slaking their indescribable but obstinate and obscene thirst." When Cozzens writes of District Attorney Martin Bunting on the other hand that "the use of good sense, the habits of control and judgment, informed every feature [of his face] with strength," or implies in countless other ways that appearances *can* sometimes be relied upon, we start to appreciate the baffling complexity of the world that he has created for the instruction of Abner Coates.

It would not be so difficult for Abner were impressions ultimately to sort themselves out as either true or false. As Cozzens sees mankind, however, "everyone" is engaged in rationalization, making what is over into what he would like it to be. So easily do these categories fuse under the heat of circumstance that appearance may imperceptibly become reality. This fact is demonstrated to Abner during the trial, when he observes Harry Wurts's performance before the jury:

He arose, it was plain, not to exhort or harangue the jury, but to counsel with them in a friendly way and to ask them to consider with him some problems which, by the grave, even worried, expression of his face, troubled him.

Abner was not sure that you could call it guile. Harry was cynical about other men's motives, and quick to spot the pretense or the assumed role; but his own motives were so urgent, the importance to him of persuading or wheedling or winning so profound, that Harry always spoke when arguing for what he wanted with complete sincerity. It could not be said that his troubled frown was faked; this was a tough assignment; he frowned at its difficulties. . . . His own tone affected Harry as much as it affected anyone else; he himself heard and heeded his own appeal. When he looked at Leming [one of the defendants], Leming looked like a skunk to him, and he would rant on in full sincerity until some instinct told him that that was enough of that.

What seems to be improper motive in this instance is not quite that. Here, as elsewhere in *The Just and the Unjust*, not just appearance but the very distinction between appearance and actuality fails as an adequate ethical criterion.

In the world that Cozzens envisions, institutional religion is also unsatisfactory as a moral instrument. Quite simply, man no longer believes very much in it. Despite his upbringing in a Presbyterian family, Abner is "embarrassed" when his father alludes one day to religion. They talk briefly, and with mutual uncertainty, about the truth of the Bible, but their conversation is doomed the moment Judge Coates compares that book to a drink of whiskey. At another time, the Judge speaks invidiously of the Roman Catholic Church, in a remark that seems to issue from Cozzens. And Abner is offended by religious burial symbols ("plinths and monoliths . . . mean little temple-shaped mausoleums, or crosses and urns and angels, that seem to show how all the dead had been in life vain and pretentious, and in death left a memory cherished by imbeciles and vulgarians"). The novelist himself betrays a disregard for the sacredness of sacred things by a subtle transference of religious qualities to secular items: the Childerstown courtroom resembles the chapter house of "some monstrous Gothic cathedral," and Stanley Howell, a kidnapper and murderer, is spoken of as a "martyr." As if to underscore the point, Cozzens gives his hero an office in a building constructed like a Greek-revival—that is, pagan—temple!

Given a universe in which traditional means of ordering one's life prove ambiguous or unreliable, or lack the force of sentiment and conviction, the young man must plant his moral standard

somewhere else. The place where Abner Coates must begin to look is in a particular quality of man and of experience itself; his virtues are to be made of the necessities Cozzens apprehends.

## II

If *The Just and the Unjust* has a heroine, then Janet (Bonnie) Drummond is it. The first time she appears in the novel, Bonnie is carrying handfuls of knives and forks—a symbolic moment that will not be lost on a generation of readers peculiarly sensitive to the abstract meaning of concrete details. The sexual import of the kitchen cutlery is plain enough. In the passage following Bonnie's initial appearance, Cozzens describes the twenty-five-year-old woman as "well-made, but long in the leg, with narrow hips and square thin shoulders." Her face is the kind "that, seen in a man with a man's coarse complexion and heavier features, is generally called raw-boned." Her mouth is "expressive but controlled." Like Lady Brett Ashley in that famous American novel, Bonnie has a masculine look about her, and though for quite different reasons, both are detached from real feeling. Of course, the knives and forks suggest at once Bonnie's desire and her hostility toward its satisfaction. But their connotations as hardware are more immediately relevant: hard, unfeeling, impersonal. Too strong as a characterization of Bonnie, these qualities nevertheless give the tenor of her life. By temperament and through years of personal deprivation, her humanity is reduced to the point where the most conspicuous thing about her is an "air of knowing her own mind." She exhibits love for Abner in a remote way, and a certain wistfulness for the ardor that she knows he lacks; but this deficiency in him is very nearly her own. We are given to understand that her courtship with Abner, whom his father accurately describes as "phlegmatic," is conducted at a low temperature.

It is important to realize that *The Just and the Unjust* is not a novel in which romantic love has been unsuccessfully introduced. In Cozzens' view, love *belongs* on the periphery of human affairs. The fact that it often refuses to stay there is a stubborn tendency to be resisted, not encouraged. If a novelist must admit romantic love to the fictional world that is, after all, only partly his creation, then let it be as unromantically adult as possible: hence the stand-off between Bonnie and Abner.

A part of this pattern is Cozzens' treatment of women and children in the novel. The children are easily described: they are either uninteresting types or "brats" (the author's word). Except for Bonnie, the female characters all play decidedly minor roles, whether as functional types (secretaries, nurses, jury members) or as slightly complex individuals (Cousin Mary). It is typical that the wife of one major character, Martin Bunting, is known to us only as "devoted," "efficient and sensible." That *The Just and the Unjust* deals principally with a courtroom trial accounts only in part for this slighting of women. In the course of over four hundred pages, Cozzens manages to place many representatives of the sex before us; those with any individuality are unattractive, troublesome creatures. Bonnie does not wholly escape this mold. Of the other female characters worth remarking, Mrs. Zollicoffer, widow of the slain dope-peddler, is unintelligent and shallow; Annette Vredenburg, adolescent daughter of the trial judge, is a "silly little fool"; Dorothy Nyce is a fifteen-years-older version of Annette; Susie Smalley, who has consorted with the criminals, is a prostitute; Bonnie's mother, Cousin Mary, is an irresponsible complainer. Although Judge Coates, Judge Irwin, Judge Vredenburg, Martin Bunting and perhaps Abner Coates can all inspire greater or lesser degrees of admiration in us, of the women only Bonnie could come close to doing so.

This is the proper context in which to examine one early scene in the novel. Running to some twenty-five pages, set off from other scenes by differences of locale and tone, the episode on the barge dramatizes for us the elements in human behavior of which James Gould Cozzens most disapproves. After the first day of the murder trial, a good many of the major characters gather for a drinking party on the barge, an old canal boat recalked, repainted, and refitted for the social uses of a private club. Abner Coates drives in his car with Martin Bunting to the canal, where their companions wait for them. They drive along a new gray concrete road between wire fences and past a church—when the imagery abruptly shifts to a cacophonous blend of appealing prospect and harsh sound:

The barge was approaching on a mile-long straightaway of tranquil water. Between the low green banks, beneath the green arch of overhanging trees, it moved at a snail's pace, fanning out

slow smooth ripples from its bow. Hoots and cheers came from it to show that Bunting and Abner had been observed. . . . On board somebody had a portable radio, and the beat of music grew louder, approaching. Thickets of underbrush shadowed most of the canal, but level sun here and there broke across the tow path. Suddenly the mules would amble into shafts of splendor. Immaculate and glowing, the barge's new paint lit up; on deck, the dazzling gold light gilded women's dresses and men's white flannels. Waiting . . . Abner could hear ice clatter in a cocktail shaker. . . .

For Cozzens, this is remarkably sensuous prose; and he employs it here—as he always writes—with a particular purpose. Its end is to create a harmony and then shatter it. Though natural, the scene is hardly idyllic. Led by Harry Wurts, the bawdy, high-strung lawyer who comes fresh from defending the kidnap-murderers in court, the more carefree party-goers drink freely and sing loudly. Annette Vredenburg, a flirt of about eighteen, talks suggestively with Abner and later succeeds in having one of the married men, Dick Nyce, make a pass at her. As the barge moves along, the full moon appears from behind the trees and Harry Wurts impulsively embraces the nearest woman.

Sensual play, alcoholic abandon—on the old boat, inhibitions give way for those individuals whose self-restraint has always been precarious. As with Huck and Jim's famous raft, the barge afloat on the canal represents in part a temporary freedom from the social and personal responsibilities of the land. But as in *Huckleberry Finn*, these responsibilities continue to exist. Duty emerges in the form of Doctor Mosher, who admonishes Abner to help relieve the loneliness of his ailing father. And seeing Bonnie's mother on the boat is enough to remind the young man of Cousin Mary's "willful and exasperating irresponsibility." In this fashion Cozzens makes concrete the opposing thematic forces in the novel. Both Abner and Bonnie are dissociated from the reckless emotion on the barge that culminates in the drunken gambol of Harry Wurts and his companions; they remain aloof from the kind of behavior peculiarly associated with romantic love, women, children, liquor and sex—namely impulsiveness, irrationality.

To Abner, "the gliding barge, its colored lanterns, its sounds of music and voices, seemed to float in pure twilight, midway between the water and the sky." Its function chiefly symbolic, the

barge furnishes a microcosm of the larger world constructed in *The Just and the Unjust*. In Cozzens' world, chaos is always threatening to break out. The very language of the novel hints of disturbance beneath the surface of things, in the "cruel refinement of tiresomeness" that is the trial or the "sinister quality" of the kidnappers' conversation or a perception that the human difference between a Bonnie Drummond and a Susie Smalley is merely "one of the ordinary horrors of life." In a way the plot, by its spasmodic decelerations and excursions, its occasional capitulation to accident, reflects the vagaries of human experience which Cozzens so acutely recognizes. Indeed the novel as a whole conspires to suggest that a man's hands are ordinarily full keeping the parts of each day from losing all shape. The extraordinary demands that interrupt Abner and Bunting throughout the trial, the crises in Abner's private life, the jury's unexpected decision to give Howell and Basso a light prison term—these and countless other caprices declare the persistent claims of disorder in men's lives.

In *The Just and the Unjust*, public and private anarchies—that is, crime and a botched life—are the disasters that all of the major characters either face or comment upon. They are the consequence of pressures from outside of man, but much more importantly of the impulsive urges from within. Howell, Basso, and the other criminals are presented as having carried out the kidnapping irrationally: if "their plans . . . rose at times to a sort of shrewdness, without intermission they fell to the most staggering stupidities." Their leader, Bailey, "acted mostly on impulse," and together they bungled themselves into murdering and then getting caught. Their bungling is matched in kind by the mistakes of Abner Coates, whose private fortunes are more centrally Cozzens' concern than the fate of the men on trial. Early in the novel, Abner possesses the knowledge that the "fatal error" for lawyers is to go off the handle." However, only after a string of painful errors followed by new perceptions does Abner come to appreciate how squarely and in what variety he must confront the results of his own impetuous actions. He is educated to this new awareness mainly through his relationships with Jesse Gearhart and Martin Bunting. Jesse by example and Martin by precept teach Abner that his first, hasty judgments of the politician are inaccurate, that his impulsive refusal to run for District Attorney is foolish, and that his ill-considered social and ethical theories do not square with the facts. The great



lesson in personal conduct which Abner must learn in the three days of the novel is just this: discipline thyself!

### III

Self-discipline is the cardinal value in the Cozzens ethic. This ethic is actually composed of two related but separable clusters of ideas, the first in importance being variously referred to by the protagonists of virtue in *The Just and the Unjust* as "sense," "good sense" or "common sense." Considered, controlled action—self-discipline—is the core of good sense. Joined to this main idea is an avoidance of extreme social and ethical views, together with a reliance on the "consensus" of "disinterested persons of generally admitted prudence." Sense also means "taking circumstances into consideration," as Judge Coates explains it to Abner, or "give and take" with other persons, as Martin Bunting tells him. And it means that ends can legitimize methods, as when Bunting in effect defends the F.B.I. agents who roughed up Stanley Howell to obtain the confession they were certain he should make.

In all respects save one, this common-sense portion of Cozzens' pragmatic ethic has no hard-and-fast lines; its general counsel is improvisation. The one rule that admits of a fairly rigid application is self-control, so that this principle understandably becomes the nearest thing to an absolute in the novelist's scheme of moral values. In this novel, impulsiveness may be said to have taken precedence over even pride in that venerable hierarchy of deadly sins.

When common sense, principally through self-restraint, governs a man's actions, then the second cluster of ideas, "reason," can come into play. By reason Cozzens means logical thinking, native intelligence, or simply mind. It is of course another form of control, in this case over the chaos of facts and relationships that daily impinge upon the human consciousness. The combination of good sense and reason, which we find in the three judges and the district attorney, is the human defense against intellectual and moral anarchy. Discipline of the self thus becomes an ordering of the world as well. This is, to be sure, almost a statement of the Ernest Hemingway code. Although the two writers obviously differ in their attitudes toward sensation and intellect, as they do in many lesser respects, the similarity of the ethic implicit in the

major work of both men is striking. Both argue the necessity of self-discipline in a universe lacking an inherent rational purpose. That two major contemporary American writers could start with such contrasting materials—how far is Pamplona from Childers-town?—and end with so much agreement may indicate how well they have understood the fundamental human dilemmas of our civilization.

The defeats that Hemingway's heroes commonly suffer also have an echo in this Cozzens novel. With justice, reason, and restraint on their side, Abner Coates and Martin Bunting have their case against the defendants come to little as the jury absurdly refuses to convict for first-degree murder. Patiently furnishing a perspective for the jury's action, Judge Coates afterward speaks to Abner of the need for allowing "right feeling" to enter into the determination of justice. The implication is that rationality has its limits, and to some extent properly so. Cozzens' emphasis in *The Just and the Unjust*, however, is on the inevitability of these limits, not on their propriety. When Judge Coates asserts in the same conversation that "there are noble and disinterested actions done every day, but I think most of them are impulsive," he is stating the irony of unreason, not urging its adoption. Sense and reason are imperative to save man from total distress.

One strength of *The Just and the Unjust* as a novel is the considerable degree to which Cozzens has translated his ethic into formal literary practice. The law is a subject appropriate to his themes because, to quote Judge Coates once again, it is "the stronghold of what reason men ever get around to using." There is an appropriateness, too, in the careful balance of two character types in the novel: those who act according to the rational, sensible spirit of the law and those who do not. The four wise men (the judges and Bunting) have in common a large measure of self-restraint and wisdom. We see them almost exclusively in their intellectual and oracular capacities. Standing over against these four, if a little in their shadow, are a number of impulsive types, among them the children, the criminals and most of the women. The character of some stature in this category is Harry Wurts. Capable of close and continuing attention to the legal problems at hand in the courtroom, Wurts is on the whole sensitive and moody, by turns "exuberant" and "suspicious." He is red-headed, as we would

expect, has an obscene sense of humor, and ridicules the habitual reserve of the district attorneys. The one changing character in the novel, Abner, develops along a line running from the immoderation of a Wurts to the moderation of a Bunting.

This symmetry is also carried out in the pairing of particular characters. It may be that the controlling hand of the novelist is too much in evidence when foils are so meticulously created as to be precisely the same age: Susie Smalley and Bonnie are both twenty-five, Abner and Harry Wurts both thirty-one. Judges Irwin and Vredenburg are approximately the same age. Other parallels are to be found in the action, where similar elements are handled so as to point up their common thematic significance. The best example is perhaps the coordinate development of Sam Field's misdemeanor and the kidnappers' crime, which issue from impulse, occur on the same spring days, are confessed under duress and penalized by an inexact justice. In restricting the action of the novel to three days, the setting to Childerstown and its vicinity, the point of view to a single character (Abner, whose choice as the perceiving mind is thus consonant with his central role as the learner), Cozzens exhibits the discipline that he has achieved and that his novel explores.

This fear of irregularity coupled with the love of restraint could conceivably produce a baroque effect, if emotion and idea were pitted against each other in equal contest. Although this conflict is the heart of *The Just and the Unjust*, Cozzens' language itself unmistakably reveals his commitment to idea, restraint. That side of Cozzens' style most often commented upon is its unvarying quality, its stubborn refusal to be interesting. "Book-keeper's prose" was the way a friend of mine once described it. He was being merely disparaging, but as an analytical observation the phrase has its merits. There is something quantitative about Cozzens' language, something measured and abstract and calculated. He favors direct explicit statement rather than oblique suggestion, so that we are likely to come away from the novel with fragments of the dialogue sticking in our minds but few images. Certain concrete details in the novel function as important symbols, but Cozzens does not as a rule think metaphorically. One has only to reread a page or two of Henry James to see how much more consistently abstract Cozzens' style is. Comparisons of these

writers have justifiably been made, but the difference in imaginative conception behind *The Just and the Unjust* and, say, "The Beast in the Jungle" is almost a difference of kind. It is characteristic of Cozzens, moreover, that the imagery he does use in this novel is drawn with few exceptions from mechanics and architecture. The cutlery that illuminates Bonnie's nature has a counterpart in Bunting's clocks and Judge Coates's wheelchair; and the measured impersonality of the courthouse clock repeatedly alluded to is matched by the Romanesque arches, Ionic columns, Gothic buildings and other architectural forms and details that interest the author. Only in a few instances does Cozzens take images from the natural world, and these are typically associated with death (Fosher's Creek, the lightning bolt that kills Bonnie's father) or women (rosebuds) or irrationality (the barge scene).

The rationalism of *The Just and the Unjust*, prompted by fear of chaos, is also the result of Cozzens' inability to enter imaginatively and sympathetically into the sensibility of the spontaneously emotional individual. Language, form, character and theme all point to this as his paramount weakness. The tradition of spontaneous virtue in American literature, first eloquently stated by Emerson and Whitman and epitomized in Cummings' "feeling is first," has its own deficiencies as a mirror of life or as a moral prescription. But it is the refreshing and necessary corrective to that other tradition, perhaps with its roots in Pauline asceticism, that the flesh must be mortified. Either view is incomplete as a mirror or guide; Cozzens' may be the one that most of us require now.

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## BY LOVE POSSESSED: The Pattern and the Hero

GEORGE GARRETT

"What, one asks one's self, is the secret of such disastrous power? The stories neglect to say. They only relate the thing accomplished. One sees Circe; one sees swine. What was in that cup?"—Julius Penrose to Arthur Winner.

*By Love Possessed* is the summation of the chief themes and concerns in Cozzens' art. It has, in Arthur Winner, his most elaborately developed hero, and it offers the most thorough exploitation of the pattern of ordered experience which identifies a Cozzens novel. Both are of great importance to any understanding or appreciation of Cozzens' art; for, unlike his contemporaries, he has deliberately turned away from formal experiment, toward the gradual refinement of a single workable technique. Similarly, he is rare, almost unique, in creating as the central character of each of his major works that most unlikely being in our time, a real hero. To grasp some of the meaning and the triumph of *By Love Possessed* one must be at least familiar with the nature of the pattern, and one must know some of the characteristics of the Cozzens hero. Since the pattern is roughly the same in all of the major novels, Cozzens' books are, in their own way, as intimately related as the chronicles of Yoknapatawpha County or the intricate genealogy of J. D. Salinger's Glass family. An art of variations upon fixed patterns is apt to be an art of risks. Pattern is always shadowed by formula, and the creation of a modern hero, one capable of causing some identification, yet able to arouse genuine admiration, has often been declared impossible. Such an art is likely, also, to be subtle, even difficult, conditions attested to by the long wait for critical recognition which Cozzens has endured and, as well, by the baffling variety of praiseworthy interpretations *By Love Possessed* has evoked from book reviewers.

The main body of Cozzens' achievement is to be found in his

"professional" novels, beginning with *The Last Adam* (1933). Like no other contemporary novelist, he has completely immersed himself in the discipline of various professions—law, medicine, the military, the ministry, and in one case, *Ask Me Tomorrow*, the writer's vocation. On the surface the books are, of course, accurate and impeccably researched, but for Cozzens' heroes the discipline of a particular profession is not so much a well-tailored uniform, to be donned or doffed in accordance with occasion, as a kind of magic clock worn by choice and with joy. Each of his heroes views reality from the standpoint and with the humors of his chosen work. (As a matter of fact, Cozzens' characters perform more actual labor in the course of one of his books than those of any other novelist writing today.) The work is the man, and it is in his work and by his work that the hero finds himself and is revealed to the reader. These heroes are, one and all, civilized men. All are well-educated for their work. All are men of superior intelligence, and all are relatively successful in the terms of their professions.

None of his heroes is, however, entirely adapted to the practical requirements of his chosen profession. George Bull, the doctor in *The Last Adam*, is, in addition to being something of a choleric man, careless and old-fashioned, though it is still his good sense which does most to combat the plague in New Winton. Ernest Cudlipp of *Men and Brethren*, probably the finest drawn minister in modern fiction, encounters severe setbacks in the ordeal of shepherding a poor parish, and his job is not made easier for him by a strong natural inclination toward the contemplative, almost the mystic, which he must keep rigorously in check. Abner Coates, the young lawyer in *The Just and the Unjust*, shares to a degree the middle-aged Arthur Winner's strict ideal of personal integrity, to some extent isolating him from his fellows and preventing him from the kind of success in action his talents seem to demand. In *Guard of Honor* Colonel Ross and General Beal, both good soldiers, must struggle to fit their particular virtues into the tense mold of general military expediency. In *Ask Me Tomorrow* it is Francis Ellery's very sensitivity, his acute sentience, that seems to prevent him from doing justice to his abilities as a writer. It can be seen that there is a kind of tragic paradox for each of these heroes. Their virtues, requisite for their chosen profession, are at once strengths and weaknesses. In each case, at some point these particu-

lar virtues must be sacrificed or, at least, modified for something more important, and it is in this sense (for these men *are* virtuous and admirable) that the pattern of Cozzens' novels is basically tragic. The qualities which his heroes display are isolating, ones which tend to separate them from the people with whom they must deal and even from those they love. Education and civilization would be enough to give them a certain distance from the crowd. Virtue makes them lonely men. Self-consciousness makes them ironic, and intelligence coupled with this self-transcendence becomes a kind of wound. "Lord help me!" Ernest Cudlipp sighs for all the Cozzens heroes. "What can I do to make you use your intelligence?"

It is from the character of the hero that the technique and the form of these novels is derived. With minor exceptions in the occasional use of an omniscient method, each of these books is at once seen and shaped by the central intelligence of the hero. Strictly speaking, *Guard of Honor* is an exception, for there we see through the eyes and minds of a number of characters, including a woman; but the bulk of that book is informed by the intelligence of Colonel Ross. The form of narration, with all events filtered through a single center of consciousness, creates its own pattern and its own difficulties. It is, for instance, difficult for a writer to indicate flaws and slight limitations in the dramatically (that is, third person) presented vision of a character who is, usually, the most intelligent character in the story. It takes time and space, and for this reason Cozzens' novels are cumulative in power and weight. Almost leisurely in pace at the beginning, they pick up speed and gather values much as a rolling stone slowly, then with increasing swiftness gathers an enormous bulk of snow. And it requires a certain distance from events, a certain spectator's objectivity. Thus, though his heroes are acutely involved in events, the real rage of reality—a rage equal to any in modern fiction, with its full quota of murders, rapes, suicides, abortions, adultery, greed, a dance of all the seven deadly sins—is off stage or placed in past time. His heroes are called to the thankless task of trying to put pieces together again. The result is, then, that the reader is presented with the reactions of the hero to events, more often than the events themselves. Paradoxically, though the pace of a Cozzens novel may be measured, even solemn, the reality represented is usually swift, the span of a few days at most.

Though the use of this technique makes severe demands on the intelligence and perceptivity of the reader, Cozzens has rejected other devices of complexity. With the spare directness most often associated with "slick" fiction, characters are briskly named, described and brought into view. There is never any doubt about who is talking to whom. There is hardly ever any distortion or a sudden shift of point of view, both of which have become characteristic of our fiction. Similarly, the language is clearly the language of prose. Cozzens has borrowed nothing from the techniques of modern poetry. The language in all the novels, though rich, is superficially simple, direct and transparent. The syntax is unsurprising, without grammatical novelty or complexity. (For reasons known only to themselves, some reviewers have complained of syntactical density in *By Love Possessed*. Perhaps his language there is, at times, more involved than in the others, but, relatively, it remains a marvel of lucidity.) Finally, Cozzens' language is inclined to be discursive, often in an after-the-fact, expository manner; and it is always in perfect decorum. Both of these qualities come from the strict adherence to the center of consciousness method. It is the hero, not the author, who weighs and judges events by rational exposition, and it is in the probable language of the hero that these things are communicated. They do not think or speak with the tongues of poets or prophets because they are doctors, lawyers, ministers and soldiers. Weather, the seasons, the aesthetic composition of outward scenes usually play a minor and subdued part in a Cozzens novel because these heroes, though observant and sensitive, are, in an old sense, men of reason. That this is the deliberate choice of the author is evident when one considers *Ask Me Tomorrow*, his one novel dealing with an intelligent hero who is almost exclusively a man of feeling. There Cozzens' ability to recreate precisely the emotional correspondence of weather, scenery, the things of this world, is clearly shown to be rich and subtle. In all cases the point of view is so decorously handled that the author vanishes.

*By Love Possessed* in no way violates the pattern of Cozzens' "professional" novels. Yet it is richer and more complex than any preceding work. It includes the variety of characters and the intricate texture of *Guard of Honor*, but, since the characters are fixed in a more "normal" setting, the town, they are seen in more detail, and they assume the additional dimension of an adequately explored



past. This locale, a town too far from the cities to be suburban and less quaintly by-passed than, say, Faulkner's Jefferson or New Winton of *The Last Adam*, offers Cozzens exactly the kind of environment with deep roots where the history of the nation from its earliest times is still a palpable presence like a long shadow. The shadow of the past is much felt in *By Love Possessed* and is represented in a variety of ways, perhaps most dexterously by the Ponemah oak at Arthur Winner's cottage by the lake, symbolizing at once the continuity of a tradition and the lost innocence of the land. It is not by accident when, paralleling Arthur Winner's experience and foreshadowing the climax of the book, the tree is wounded by a great bolt of lightning.

Compression in actual time—forty-nine hours announced by the clock—permits Cozzens to concentrate on the intricate web of personal relationships and the kinship of past time and present events. He traces Arthur Winner's whole life, from childhood to middle age, in more detail than he had previously allowed himself for any hero. And, as if he intended bringing together all his major works in this book, Cozzens introduces into the plot the professions he has used and studied. The law, of course, is dominant. A variety of lawyers is seen in considerable detail, and the skill evident in *The Just and the Unjust*, or in the finely drawn character of the former judge, Colonel Ross of *Guard of Honor*, is in no way diminished. The ministry appears in the form of Doctor Trowbridge; Reggie Shaw, the doctor, shares not a little of the rage and singularity of George Bull; General Wilcox and the dead Warren Winner, recalled by Arthur Winner, evoke in a few pages the taut spirit of *Guard of Honor*. It is not, however, merely as a convenience or as the exercise of acquired knowledge and skill that Cozzens chooses to center his story in the mind of a lawyer. The law has continuity and precedent, is based on the concept of a tradition hardy enough to bear the weight of the past and lithe enough to wrestle angels and demons of the present. And the law's great myth, the presumed rationality of all but bedlamites, allows Cozzens through Arthur Winner to focus the pitiless light of reason on the motives, excesses and passions of his characters, and, of course, on Arthur Winner himself. The results can be beautifully ironic.

Arthur Winner is the most rounded, the best educated of Cozzens heroes. When he is introduced at the beginning, standing

in his mother's house and hearing the clock strike three, he has reached in middle age a poise and wisdom of the world which make him seem of all the heroes the most likely to succeed. He is, it seems, a finished man. It is paradoxical, then, that the next two days become the most intensive education of Arthur Winner's life. Shocking events in the present jar him, and, stirred, he is forced to reconsider, to re-evaluate the formative experiences of his past. At last he is forced to sacrifice the single great virtue he has most passionately displayed, his integrity. It is a real sacrifice, quite different from the offering up of youthful idealism which was required of Abner Coates in *The Just and the Unjust*. Early in the book Arthur Winner's mother exclaims, "Oh, Arthur, nobody could be more scrupulous than you are!" And her judgment, which is Arthur Winner's sole vestige of pride and self-esteem, is amply demonstrated by his actions in complex situations and by the intensity of his self-scrutiny. Not saintly, Arthur Winner is shown to have failed in many ways—with the education of his own children, with the wife of his friend and partner Julius Penrose—but his unflinching awareness of these failures has been a part of his own education. At the end, like the other Cozzens heroes in kind if not degree, he must endure a final stripping away of pride in himself and in what he has believed. It is in this nakedness that he hears the clock strike four as the book ends where it began, and he calls with all the dignity and assurance of the truly finished man, "I'm here."

The theme of the book is a gold scroll on the clock that bells the beginning and the end—*omnia vincit amor*. And it is love in all its forms and disguises that is offered for the reader's inspection. A whole catalogue of possible ways of love is worked into the story—frigidity, rape, homosexuality, adultery, married love, parental love, the love of place, even, philosophically, the love of virtue. And, indeed, all of the characters in the story are, in one sense or another, possessed by love. But the mistake of most of the book reviewers has been to identify Cozzens' position with that of his narrator (or the crippled gadfly Julius Penrose) to such an extent that the irony of the book is seen as sardonic satire. There is a distinction which Cozzens makes throughout the book between love, as charity, and love as consuming passion. Passion, much the same thing in Cozzens' view as what Augustine called spiritual concupiscence, is shown to be destructive and, most certainly, "self-

division's cause." Charity is shown to be as rare and unlikely as the unicorn, but strangely enduring; and in the end Arthur Winner is motivated more by charity than reason when he yields up his pride and his integrity. There is special irony here, for Winner's desire has been in some way to emulate his father, the Man of Reason. It is ironic when one sees that this is, in fact, exactly what he has done, and in so doing he has failed until the end to notice the real legacy of his father, the amusing clock with its message written in gold. By the end Arthur Winner has seen passion conquer all and, conquering, destroy. He has been much wounded, but there is a great sense of tragic nobility in his completed awareness. He leaves his paradise of innocence like Milton's Adam.

The art of *By Love Possessed* is subtle and demanding. By turning away from almost all the familiar conventions of the modern novel Cozzens has been forced to create his own form and his own public. He has taken a hard way, one of rigor and inhibition. Lacking the obvious appearance of great technical virtuosity and novelty, he is not likely to win more than a passing salute from those whose critical standards are based on the recognition and appreciation of these things. Because he is readable and presents few surface difficulties, he is not likely to be understood by the mass reading public which has made *By Love Possessed* a best seller. There is irony in his own position as an American artist. Overlooked by critics for too long, he has now been overpraised for many of the wrong reasons and without much awareness that the particular virtues and limitations of *By Love Possessed* have been available in his fiction for a quarter of a century. *By Love Possessed* is a kind of final achievement, an earned masterpiece of his own method. It is not really, sales and acclaim aside, a fashionable art, and it is unlikely that any of the younger serious writers will use his art as a model. It is not, in fact, an imitable art. Even for Cozzens, who made a number of false starts before he found his true subject and his true talent, it was hard won. But *By Love Possessed* is a permanent achievement in the novel form, and the labor, the honesty, the skill and dedication of its author will move and will serve as an example and a challenge to writers and critics alike.

## Comments on Cozzens

*Editors' Note:* The selections which follow are short contributions written by scholars and critics interested in contemporary fiction. That the list of contributors is not longer is not surprising: it merely indicates once more that until *By Love Possessed* Cozzens had been less read than perhaps any other serious American novelist who had been writing important novels since the 1920's (the number of replies to our request for capsule comments was as great from people who said they would have nothing to say since they knew little about Cozzens' novels as from those who said they would not be able to contribute for other reasons).

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### 1. A HIGH PLACE

The fate of the serious artist in America has always been a curious one; surely no less so today than in the time of Melville or of Howells. Politics intervene. Coterries and critics take over. Publishers decide to push and puff. Too often, one feels, the reputation of a given writer has little to do, over the short haul at least, with anything approximating merit or quality. If Mr. Cozzens has for years been a particular victim of literary politics (I don't know if he has or not) someone or something is apparently determined to see to it that he will now take his place in the sun along with Mlle. Sagan and Mr. Faulkner. It so happens that *By Love Possessed* comes along at a certain time and with a certain message, and one sees only too clearly that the latter will be misconstrued and the former held against Mr. Cozzens. After all, this most distinguished novelist has been having his anti-romantic say for better than thirty years and no one has minded. Now that all hands are ready to puff him it becomes apparent that Mr. Cozzens' philosophy, or whatever, will be seized upon by weak-minded conservatives as a (needless) substantiation of a position with which sense and reason have nothing to do, let alone Mr. Cozzens.

The theme of *By Love Possessed* is the familiar one writ large in the pages of all the novels from *S. S. San Pedro* (1931) through *Guard of Honor* (1948). In every successive book, the situation, characters and scope become denser, more complex, more

embracing of reality. The style develops, becomes marvellously various and tough, the vocabulary grows in subtlety and allusiveness, the syntax increases in packed suppleness. In this latest novel, one is inevitably reminded of the later James and the later Conrad—not in respect to theme or manner so much as in the development of the art of the novel along the lines inevitable with such conscious stylists. Theme is constant, moral plight similar, from novel to novel, and the true reader of an author revels in the unfolding before his eyes of a personal style, faith, and aesthetic.

Yet, as in the case of any great stylist, there are peculiar hazards. James writes *The Golden Bowl*, Conrad *Chance*; now Mr. Cozzens has given us *By Love Possessed*. The three novels may for my purposes stand together as examples of each author at his most typical, at his most quintessential. And the results are not wholly satisfactory. Mr. Cozzens has written a novel of masterly ironic incident, great complexity, and high style. By any standard, he ranks with or above our best; indeed, I can name no one, excepting C. P. Snow, who can deal with the world we live in with anything like Mr. Cozzens' cogency and variety. The style is often a joy to listen to, and some of the reflections and retrospective ruminations are pure gold. Even the acerb comments on various political and religious doctrines can extort chuckles from those who are their butts. As Francis, in *Ask Me Tomorrow* says of his own contemplated novel, "The situation is ironic but heroic." That in essence is Mr. Cozzens' aim, here and in all the other novels.

It seems to me that in this instance it is here that the essential failure lies. The irony sparkles or cuts viciously. The steady, stoical eye is taken in nowhere, never; yet where is the heroism? Arthur Winner, the novel's protagonist, seems to me to lack features and form, as the story as a whole seems to me to lack a central action, a simple corny conflict. In *Guard of Honor*, will Bus Beal get himself and Ocanara out of the mess? In *Ask Me Tomorrow*, will Francis reconcile love for Lorna, his writing, and the getting of a living? In *The Just and the Unjust*, will Abner Coates marry Bonnie and take the job of district attorney? Pure soap opera, the essence of any novel, and I think one misses it in *By Love Possessed*. Arthur Winner's ultimate shouldering of responsibility and his facing of guilt do not, I think, come to us sufficiently out of lived, dramatized action; they are described, and that powerfully, they are discussed and that intricately and multivocally; but they do not

come before us as vital, engaging acts achieved in the stress of felt emotion and labored choice. We know the acts and the choices are there and that they derive from a nature "wise and kind," but I am afraid that Arthur Winner himself is not a Judge Ross or a Nat Hicks. He lacks, simply, credibility, not, please, in the sense that he isn't a common man or something; merely in the sense that he is acted upon, is done to, one might say, and the speculations he engages in, the long analyses, are less his than the author's. This last of course has always been true of Mr. Cozzens' novels; he has never attempted to fiddle with point of view and has not shied away from intruding his own ideas. Still, in *Guard of Honor*, for example, one felt a vitality, a reserve of power, so great that the comments, the sardonic and ironic deflationary pin-pricks, not only in themselves delighted but added to the very vitality already sensed. One's own pet self-deceptions, held up to tolerant laughter, amused even that self. Francis, in *Ask Me Tomorrow*, is certainly as comic, near-tragic and appealing a hero as the modern American novel has produced, and one may well attribute this to, among other things, the author's perfect tact and balance.

Nevertheless, all the work since 1931 comes to at least a partial summing-up in *By Love Possessed*, and seeing thus the whole canon laid out, as it were, one cannot avoid the conclusion that this Puritanical, aristocratic, angular novelist is the best we have. The first mature work is very good, the novels of the forties are fine indeed; the entire achievement, marked by a steady increase in power, complexity, and formal mastery, must convince us that Mr. Cozzens is that almost unknown phenomenon in American letters, the artist with staying-power and the capacity to grow. I do not doubt that even as Conrad went on from *Chance*, Mr. Cozzens will go on from *By Love Possessed*, for despite what seems to me to be a too elaborate literary quality of style, a too great an insistence on the ironic aside, and a too cavalier disregard for central action and conflict, the fact remains that the book is absorbing, packed full of good things, and utterly beyond the juvenilities usually called literature. This sort of thing is not for children. Women won't like it, just as they don't like Conrad. But when all the *Time* dust has settled, when all the mature-minded conservatives have done their best to spoil it with their adulation, *By Love Possessed* will probably hold a high place in the work of

James Gould Cozzens, not the highest perhaps, but well up there. And since there is nobody like him, that is a considerable eminence.

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## 2. BY COZZENS POSSESSED

I am interested in the fact that *Critique* is preparing a special issue on the work of James Gould Cozzens. It is a good idea, and I hope the magazine will do the same thing for other American writers. There might be a special issue, for example, on some of the new novelists, like William Styron or John Griffin and the rest, who have not yet achieved Mr. Cozzens' distinction, and need recognition more.

Mr. Cozzens, however, is certainly due for some of the attention he has recently received. Even though, as so often the case with art and fame, it is probably the wrong attention for the wrong book.

He is an intelligent and thoughtful writer, admirable in many respects, who has the dedication of a serious craftsman. One cannot dismiss him lightly, though he tends also to be a rather solemn novelist. I remember one discussion of his work at a Vermont college when all the professors were praising his work until finally an irate citizen broke out with: "If Mr. Cozzens is so high and mighty, why can't I read him?"

I had sympathy for this student of the arts. What he needs probably, the high and mighty Mr. Cozzens, is some charge of primary emotion which might give his work more color. Along with this in his writings, there is probably a lack of primary experience, or let us say, the ordinary experiences of living, but the real ones. (From college to the writer's study is not the best training for a novelist, and part of Mr. Cozzens' dedication to his craft is at the expense of life itself; always a difficult choice for the artist.) Then I suspect Mr. Cozzens' conservatism, high-minded as it is, cuts him off things; his ascetic temperament leads him to scholarly rather than to wise conclusions. What I am suggesting is a lack of general sympathy and understanding for poor, weak, suffering humanity—people, I mean.

Now the point is that *By Love Possessed* is probably the attempt just to get at this issue in his own life and career. (Writers are usually much more aware, though often not consciously, of their defects than are their critics.) The new novel is not a completely successful attempt, either. The critical furore over the book is a curious sign of the times.

Somehow it is tied up in my mind with the same kind of recent adulation of Herman Wouk, on the part of the *Time-Life* magazine axis at least. Here it is the exaltation of mediocrity that is being sought after. It signifies a return to normalcy, decency, sobriety, etc., in our literary trends. No love, no passion or sex, no divorces, no unhappiness; or what is the same thing in the theme of Mr. Cozzens' novel, that these impulses are dangerous and destructive, as indeed they are. Mr. T. S. Eliot gave us the same moral in "The Cocktail Party," recently, but I still prefer the old Dreiserian view, or Whitman's view, that these dangerous feelings are what make life interesting, valuable, entertaining. They are life.

The praise of Mr. Cozzens' book implies a return to "reason," which somehow means a return to conservatism, conformity, and the rest. This is the one thing we need least in our literature at the moment—or for the next decade, in fact. This is the one thing we already have too much of, in the national and the literary spirit today. What we need is probably the opposite of this.

Mr. Cozzens (to whom I must apologize for making him in turn a symbol of the time spirit, when he is after all mainly a writer) is a rationalist and a classicist by temperament. This is a valuable strain in our literature, and we always have had, and will have, writers who uphold this tradition. There is Edith Wharton, say, or Willa Cather, or Ellen Glasgow. Oddly enough, it is not so easy to think of masculine American novelists who fall into this category, unless we go back to William Dean Howells.

The fact is, until the 1940's and 1950's, that contemporary American writing was nearer the other pole of the literary temperament: rebellious, wild, subjective and romantic in general. But the issue is not really that of Cozzens *versus* American literature, as it was put by the editor of *Harper's* magazine, for example. It is not even Cozzens *versus* Hemingway, Faulkner, or Algren. We need them each, we have room for all, and a little cross-breeding might help them all.



For the major artists combine both the classic and romantic strains, it seems to me, and when a writer can be "labeled" too clearly, it is to his disadvantage. Now one more comment might be pertinent to the current vogue. ("By Cozzens Possessed?") I simply have not yet met one reader of the new novel, excepting the adamantine Cozzens fans, who has really enjoyed it.

I wonder whether it is the fault of these readers, including most of my young writer-friends who have been studying Mr. Cozzens. Or does the new novel also lack the gaiety, the pleasure, the enjoyment—as well as the tortures and torments—which belong to the realm of "love." Good God, has that become dull, too?

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### 3. PRUDENCE AND PERDITION

*The Son of Perdition*, Mr. Cozzens' first good novel and still one of his best, clarifies his later work in interesting ways. Having already made one try with a Cuban subject-matter, he seems to have decided in this novel to attempt a minor *Nostromo*, limited in scale and realistic in tone, and if that was the case, he succeeded. In the place of Conrad's Gould, he offered his Mr. Stellow, the visionary proconsul of United Sugar who strives to impose reason and efficiency on the lazy disorder of a backward province. In giving us this portrait he made it clear that the agent of cold and sterile Reason, however deceptive in appearance, is no less damned than the deraciné cynic whose instinct is to smash anything that comes to hand and spread confusion where he can. Curiously, Mr. Cozzens never again portrayed men who make institutions except as the given element of his story—like General Beal in *Guard of Honor*. To focus on such men is to call in question the moral value of the world they make. But this, for Mr. Cozzens, is to exercise the impractical reason and neglect the prudential problem of how to live in a world we never made. Even within *The Son of Perdition*, Stellow becomes a given quantity and so does his adversary the derelict engineer,—two Americans as remote from the apprehension of the native villagers and as powerful in establishing the conditions of life as if they were God and the Devil. On such a

moral stage, the most familiar character for readers of the later novels is the local priest, a man who "had never conceived his mission to be reforming men. He did not think men could be reformed, only helped; and at the end, by God's grace, saved." But in 1929, when *The Sun Also Rises* and *The Sound and the Fury* were putting his own novel in a permanent shadow, Mr. Cozzens, too, was interested in tragic themes. The moral gravity of the novel comes most of all from the native fisherman who foolishly thought it a great honor to bear the name of Monaga and by asserting his dignity, created it, even at the cost of life. In succeeding novels, the conditions of life recur as they are defined in this early work, and while Fray Alejandro's social quietism reappears in many forms, Vidal Monaga's heroic absurdity reappears not at all. With the single vision of the resolute artist, Mr. Cozzens has made prudence his constant theme. What he leaves out is the foolishness which may be wisdom.

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#### 4. A MUTED VIOLENCE

These brief remarks on James Gould Cozzens are based on a very incomplete knowledge of his work—I have read only three of his novels. Readers with a fuller knowledge of his work may have good reason to disagree. The books I have read are *The Last Adam*, *The Just and the Unjust*, and *Castaway*. The last of these, very unlike the other two, is a little on the gimmicky side. *The Last Adam* and *The Just and the Unjust* have certain premises in common and I assume they are representative of the "Cozzens world." Both novels say that morality has to confront not Good vs. Evil but Good-and-Evil. In the former a rather messy doctor serves the community better than the community understands, and in the latter a young lawyer learns the difference between legal justice and human or jury justice. To put it another way, Cozzens says that to make bricks you have to get your hands dirty in the clay. These themes are not peculiar to Cozzens. One finds them in such diverse writers as E. M. Forster and Robert Penn Warren.

Most of our eminent American novelists write novels of violence. What seems peculiar to Cozzens is that he creates a muted violence, like a depth bomb that ruffles the surface only a little. This places him in a middle position between the quiet English novel and the violent American novel.

One matter that disturbs me a little about Cozzens is that his sentences are if not infelicitous at least undistinguished. Despite this his novels "come off." This suggests there may be a paradoxical relationship between his subject matter and his form—an interesting question for someone looking for a thesis subject!

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## 5. JAMES GOULD COZZENS

It is a nice puzzle why, up until the recent publication of *By Love Possessed*, the work of James Gould Cozzens had for so long been so much ignored by both the literary critic and the common reader. Certainly Cozzens had demonstrated virtues enough to make him reasonably attractive to both. The critic might have observed that this novelist had always taken his art seriously, had been dedicated to it, and, rather than sticking to a safe formula, had continually risked experiments in artistic expression. Always interested in problems of technique, he had developed skill in the social novel, where he had learned how to draw the many actions of a large number of characters into a concentrated, ordered whole. On the other hand, the technical devices usually were not so complicated as to render the novels opaque to the common reader, and the latter would have been sure of meeting in most of Cozzens' novels with solidly real, recognizable people. Cozzens' conservative outlook should have made him attractive to a considerable number of Americans, and even liberals might have admired the courage and independence with which he expressed his views in fictional form.

The neglect was unjust, but the present adulation of Cozzens as the great American novelist still sounds suspiciously like a kind of over-compensation. For the fact is that there is an important area

of creative failure in Cozzens' work: he cannot project himself into a person whom he dislikes or with whom he fundamentally disagrees. One cannot legitimately object to his finding his subject more and more within a certain social layer—white, Protestant, upper-middle-class. The trouble with him as a writer is not that his personal attitudes are limited, but that they consciously or unconsciously limit his artistic intelligence. To take only one example, there are probably liberals enough like Lieutenant Edsell in *Guard of Honor* who are championing the Negro cause merely as an outlet for their own neuroticisms; but the assumption of the novel is that anyone who objects to established social patterns should be contemptuously dismissed as merely a "sorehead." The artistic limitations of the conservative Cozzens can quickly be seen if he is compared with, say, Dreiser. The radical Dreiser is consistently fair in his presentation of Samuel Griffiths, the hard-headed small capitalist who is willing to give his poor nephew Clyde a start in the economic struggle; and he is remarkably understanding in his portrayal of Clyde's mother, whose religious fanaticism he detests yet whom he nevertheless makes infinitely pathetic in her suffering. Unlike Dreiser, Cozzens has an iciness at the center of his critical heart; and this is why, unlike Dreiser, he remains an interesting, even important writer, not a great one.

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## A James Gould Cozzens Check List

JAMES B. MERIWETHER

This check list includes all of the published writings of James Gould Cozzens known to me which appeared after 1920, when the sixteen-year-old author's article on Kent School appeared in *Atlantic*. It is doubtful if any author cares to be reminded about his juvenilia, and Cozzens has for some years encouraged the public to ignore his first four novels. I have nevertheless included his undergraduate pieces in the *Harvard Advocate*, because it seemed unreasonable to include his well known school-boy article and the novel *Confusion*, written his freshman year at Harvard, and leave out his other published work of that period.

In the last section are listed articles about Cozzens, and two reference works which contain biographical material of value. I have omitted a number of brief pieces and excerpts from books which added nothing to what was said about Cozzens in other works listed here. Reviews of the books are listed in the first section, under each novel, and here too I have included only pieces which seemed (at least in part) to have some value to the more than casual reader of Cozzens. My standards were obviously much lower for the first four books, but I have throughout omitted reference to reviews in the less readily available newspapers.

I have not listed miscellaneous reprintings of work by Cozzens, except in one case where a change in title might cause confusion, and in another where an anthology made a poem and a short story far more widely available than in their original publication in the *Harvard Advocate*. The English editions of the novels, all published in London, are included, but translations are beyond the scope of this check list.

Capitalization has been normalized, and necessary punctuation has been supplied, in the titles of works (both by and about Cozzens) cited in this check list, but abbreviations have been avoided in order to make it a more useful reference.

The compilation of this check list was greatly aided by the generous cooperation of Mr. and Mrs. James Gould Cozzens. Mrs.

Cozzens, who as Miss Bernice Baumgarten of Brandt & Brandt, New York, is also her husband's literary agent, was of the greatest assistance in tracking down little known items. Professor Carvel Collins of M.I.T. was kind enough to check all the Cozzens pieces in the *Harvard Advocate* for me. I am also indebted to Professor Richard Ludwig of Princeton University, and to the reference staffs of the New York and Boston Public Libraries and the Free Public Library of Trenton, New Jersey, for their assistance.

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Carter, John, *New York Evening Post Literary Review*, May 10, 1924, p. 739.

R. B. F., *The New Republic*, Vol. 40 (September 24, 1924), p. 105.

Shipley, Joseph T., *The Nation*, Vol. 119 (July 23, 1924), p. 100.

Michael Scarlett. New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925. 318 pp.  
English edition: Robert Holden, 1927.

### Reviews:

(Anon.,) *The New York Times Book Review*, November 15, 1925, p. 8.

*Cock Pit*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1928, 302 pp.

### Reviews:

(Anon.,) *The New York Times Book Review*, October 7, 1928, pp. 28, 31.

Bramble, David, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, October 7, 1928, p. 4.

*The Son of Perdition*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1929. 304 pp. English edition: Longmans, Green, 1929.

### Reviews:

McFee, William, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, September 1, 1929, p. 2.

Poorc, C. G., *The New York Times Book Review*, October 6, 1929, p. 7.

S. S. San Pedro. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931. 136 pp. Reprinted, with minor revisions, from *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (August 1930), pp. 113-128, 214-228. English edition: Longmans, Green, 1931.

### Reviews:

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Southron, Jane Spence, *The New York Times Book Review*, September 6, 1931, p. 7.

Warner, Arthur, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, August 30, 1931, p. 12.

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Reviews:

Chamberlain, John, *The New York Times Book Review*, January 8, 1933, pp. 6, 14.

Paterson, Isabel, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, January 8, 1933, p. 6.

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Benét, William Rose, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Vol. 11 (November 17, 1934), pp. 285, 289.

Tilden, David C., *New York Herald Tribune Books*, December 16, 1934, pp. 15, 16.

*Men and Brethren*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936. 282 pp. English edition: Longmans, Green, 1936.

Reviews:

Blackmur, R. P., *The Southern Review*, Vol. 1 (Spring 1936), pp. 895-897.

Brickell, Herschel, *New York Post*, January 2, 1936, p. 15.

Kingsland, Dorothea, *The New York Times Book Review*, January 19, 1936, p. 6.

Kronenberger, Louis, *The Nation*, Vol. 142 (January 15, 1936), p. 79.

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Reviews:

Daniels, Jonathan, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Vol. 22 (June 29, 1940), p. 11.

Feld, Rose, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, June 16, 1940, p. 2.

*The Just and the Unjust*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942. 434 pp. English edition: Jonathan Cape, 1943.

Reviews:

Chafee, Zechariah, Jr., *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 56 (March 1943), pp. 833-836.

Feld, Rose, *New York Herald Tribune Books*, July 26, 1942, p. 5.

Gorman, Herbert, *The New York Times Book Review*, July 26, 1942, pp. 1, 18.

Hergesheimer, Joseph, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Vol. 25 (July 25, 1942), p. 5.

Sylvester, Harry, *Commonweal*, Vol. 36 (July 31, 1942), pp. 354-355.

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- Gill, Brendan, *The New Yorker*, Vol. 33 (August 24, 1957), pp. 106, 107, 108, 109.
- Hicks, Granville, *The New Leader*, Vol. 40 (September 2, 1957), pp. 17, 18.
- Nemerov, Howard, *The Nation*, Vol. 185 (November 2, 1957), pp. 306-308.
- West, Jessamyn, *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, August 25, 1957, p. 1.

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- 1926 "A Letter to a Friend," *Pictorial Review*, Vol. 27, No. 8 (May 1926), pp. 16, 116, 117.
- 1929 "Future Assured," *The Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 202, No. 18 (November 2, 1929), pp. 22-3, 116, 120, 121, 124.
- 1930 "The Defender of Liberties," *Alhambra*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (January 1930), pp. 14-17, 54, 55, 56.
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- "We'll Recall It with Affection," *The Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 203, No. 14 (October 4, 1930), pp. 12-13, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154.
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- 1931 "Fortune and Men's Eyes," *Woman's Home Companion*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (February 1931), pp. 29-30, 134, 136, 138, 140.



- "Farewell to Cuba," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (November 1931), pp. 533-44.
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- 1933 "Every Day's a Holiday," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 94, No. 6 (December 1933), pp. 339-344.
- 1934 "My Love to Marcia," *Collier's*, Vol. 93, No. 9 (March 3, 1934), pp. 16-17, 46, 47.
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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Pembroke College, Cambridge  
19 July 1957

Dear Sir,

In "Two Letters from Dame Anna Earwicker", *Critique I* (Summer 1957), 11-14, Mr. Fred H. Higginson draws attention to several errors of transcription in an article of mine, "The Earliest Sections of *Finnegans Wake*", *James Joyce Review*, I (Feb. 2, 1957). Mr. Higginson's criticisms are entirely justified; and there are in fact still further errors in my article, as I have pointed out in a note to the *James Joyce Review*. This inaccuracy is largely explained by the fact that I did not have an opportunity to correct the proofs of my article.

Yours etc.

M. J. C. Hodgart

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